

Ocean County Vocational Technical School

Working in the Field

Sharing Success Stories



Student's Name: Tara Bryan

OCVTS Program: Practical Nursing

Instructors: Maryellen Picchiello, Deb Harker and Lora Lynn Strazzella

Employers: Hackensack Meridian at Southern Ocean Medical Center and Healogics, Manahawkin, NJ

Class of: 2014

Center: Toms River

High School: Manchester

In Tara's own words: Ever since I was a child, I knew my profession would consist of helping others. I find so much enjoyment in it. As if graduating high school and hitting the harsh world of reality was not hard enough, I was a young single mother and homeless. I had many obstacles ahead of me, but I was determined. In researching careers, I noticed jobs in the healthcare industry were rising, promising job security in the future. I knew it was where I wanted to be. I started by applying to OCVTS in Toms River. The school was highly rated and within distance for me to work something out for transportation. I needed to work, so the Certified Nurse Aide night class was the perfect opportunity. Upon completion of the course, I became a CNA and enjoyed working a full time job. This continued for five years, where I worked beside amazing nurses and staff. I now had a happy family with three children and an amazing husband. I knew OCVTS offered an accelerated LPN program. I also knew it would be a commitment and a challenge, but one I was ready for. I applied, had my interview, and passed my entrance exam. Before I knew it, I was a confident, full time nursing student at a school with a 96% pass rate, the highest rate in New Jersey for a vocational nursing program. OCVTS was clean, organized, and staffed with passionate teachers who were teaching something not only that they enjoyed, but loved.

Growing as a nurse you realize every person has their own story and not to judge. I encounter some people who are angry or sad, because, let's face it, no one wants to be dealing with grief, getting tests or feel they might be fighting a losing battle. I try to be there for them and do everything I can, even if it is just sitting there holding their hand. As nurses, we just know how much these little gestures mean to a patient. The rewarding part for me is making a patient smile, even for only one minute. It is the hug and the "I will miss you" that I receive when a patient is discharged. It is when an upset or unfriendly patient who did not want to be here in the first place is now sad at the thought of leaving because we made him or her feel at home. I guess my whole point in this is that is exactly how the teachers made me feel. I was their student and was stressed and sometimes overwhelmed at the thought of another correlated exam. The teachers were always be that comforting voice telling me I could do it, loving their job and making me feel at home.



It has been three years since I received the amazing news. I passed my NCLEX. I currently have experience in long-term care, sub-acute care, inpatient and outpatient hospital setting, and management. I am blessed with two amazing jobs. I work for a company named Healogics (the nation's largest provider in advanced wound care healing) as a Hyperbaric Nurse and Safety Director. I see patients five days a week literally watching them heal before my eyes, while developing great relationships with them all. Also, I am employed with Hackensack Meridian at Southern Ocean Medical Center (a leading healthcare provider to the region) on the Transitional Care Unit. It truly is the best workplace, with the best team, offering the best care.

Some advice to the future nurses reading this, nursing is not what you see on TV. Go into the field with realistic expectations. You won't know everything and you never will. Trying to fake your way through a procedure will not benefit you or the patient. If you have a day off, enjoy it! Always allow yourself downtime. We tend to forget we need to take care of ourselves as well. A laugh will get you through tough times and it reduces stress. A little levity can go a long way. Lastly, nursing school is tough, but it prepares you. You will need a back bone for this career, but you will always be reminded how rewarding becoming a nurse is. The world needs more nurses!

My teachers at OCVTS were tough and fun. They prepared me with the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking required for a nursing career. We can only be taught so much, the rest follows with experience. Much thanks to Mrs. Harker, Mrs. Picchiello, and the rest of the staff. Attending OCVTS was a great decision, becoming a nurse is amazing and life changing. I truly enjoy what I do.

More than a LPN success, Maryellen Picchiello submitted Tara Bryan for also having a story that needed to be told.