

Men in nursing at UWO break traditional views

by **Kristen Manders - Thursday, December 16, 2010**

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The traditional view had been that men are doctors and women are nurses, but as women strive to break gender stereotypes for becoming doctors, an increasing number of men are joining the nursing field.

Nursing is a career intended for anyone who enjoys people, job security and working three-day weeks with 12-hour shifts. The buffet-line of medical practices offers anyone with a nursing degree a variety of jobs to choose from.

William Lecher '87, graduated from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh with a Bachelor of Science in nursing and moved to Chicago to start his first job as a staff nurse at Rush Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center.

Prior to attending UW Oshkosh, Lecher worked in construction and realized that the seasonal job was not what he wanted out of life. After some mentoring, Lecher knew he wanted a career where he could work with people, have income and have job security — nursing would provide those things.

"I graduated from UW Oshkosh, have had a great career to date and look forward to the future," Lecher said. "I have not once regretted my decision to become a professional nurse."

Lecher had mentors throughout college and his career that encouraged him to continue his education and growth in the nursing field. He attended graduate school at the University of Chicago.

His master's degrees have prepared him for leadership positions, and now he is the president of the American Assembly for Men in Nursing (AAMN).

The stereotypes for men in nursing haven't changed since Lecher became a nurse, but interest in groups like AAMN has tripled in the last three years. Four times as many local chapters of AAMN exist now as did three years ago.

When Lecher talks to students and parents about being a male nurse, he encourages students to work in the field.

"I was having lunch with a young man and his dad, and the most important thing that dad wanted to know is that it was OK for his son to become a nurse," Lecher said. "I told him, it absolutely was OK and that as a nurse his son will be employable for the rest of his life."

The young man Lecher spoke to will be starting his clinicals in January.

It is no secret that nursing provides interesting, rewarding career options that offer ever-changing job duties during which you care for people.

Peter Mueller '11, College of Nursing student and former center for the UW Oshkosh football team, wants to begin a career as an emergency department nurse because day-to-day activities would vary, and he would get to care for people.

Men and women nurses have the same goal — caring for patients — which can make it seem like there is no difference being a male nurse.

“There are times when female patients are not comfortable with me providing cares for them because I am a male,” Mueller said. “It’s not that I am not qualified to perform the tasks. The female patients just feel more comfortable with female nurses.”

Some patients will confuse Mueller for a doctor because of the male doctor stereotype. Often, he will get called in to a room to help rotate a patient because of his large physique, but helping others out is not a problem for Mueller, who is used to being a part of a team.

“Playing football prepared me for the nursing program,” Mueller said. “In nursing there is a team of nurses, doctors, physical therapists, lab techs and many others who care for a patient. Football taught me the skills needed to be a team player and a leader.”

Balancing football practice with his studies helped Mueller learn to manage his time, which is critical to nursing because they have to be able to plan out their daily routine to provide the best patient care.

There is no definite reason why there are more women than men in nursing, and there is no discrepancy between the levels of care patients get from either gender.

“Patients and families are regularly satisfied with the competence, care and compassion received by men in nursing,” Lecher said.

There are 34 male nursing students out of the 381 students enrolled in CON at UW Oshkosh, and with each additional male enrolled, gender equality improves.