

September 2019 – Patty, LPN

Patty was nominated by a patient who was helping her teenaged son cope with anxiety and depression. "Patty doted over my son, laughed at his oddball jokes and made him comfortable and at ease while he was there," the nomination read. "This is such a vital part of teens in mental health crisis! Patty helped Dr. Grimes to get my son to open up and try medication as an option." Later in the nomination, the mother wrote: "She also made me (as a nervous mom in the waiting room) at ease with the fact that my son was getting excellent, thorough care. Her competence, confidence, cheerfulness and empathy make her the best nurse I have ever had! Thanks for having her on staff!"

October 2020 - Sonia, RN

Sonia's nomination: "Sonia was amazing to have as a nurse when I was in recovery after having my first baby. She was so sweet, and it was evident she was intent on providing the best care for both my baby and I. Sonia was so helpful with teaching us and helping us navigate the first day with a newborn. She was a big help with breastfeeding, diaper changes and everything in between! She always made sure baby, dad and I were comfortable. It was clear that Sonia was passionate about her job and providing the best patient care possible!"

April 2021 – Ayesha, RN

Here is one of Ayesha's nominations: "I was diagnosed with colon cancer and thought I beat it. A year ago, I was diagnosed with metastatic colorectal cancer that pretty much took over my body. To make it easier on my family, I transferred all my care to Tri-County Health Care. The biggest part of that was coming to Ambulatory Care for my Chemo treatments. Now mind you, I am not the easiest person to get along with, and sometimes I am not very patient with those charged with my care. Ayesha made my treatments and the time that I had to spend in treatment bearable. She played along with my humor and made me feel like she and her staff really cared and were not just there to check the box and do a job. Ayesha gave me her personal telephone number and encouraged me to call her at any time. She checked in on me often. She made sure my family was always in the know calling my sister-in-law when I did not answer the phone (which I commonly did not). She would give me instructions and then call the sister-in-law just in case I forgot or did not get the full message. The kindness and compassion that she showed to me made my journey so much more bearable. When I ended up in your ER (which I often did), she was there. When I ended up in the hospital, whether at Tri-County or another one, she was there. Either in person or on the phone. When I was not being honest with Dr. Swenson at my appointments, she made sure to stop the conversation and ensure he had the full story. To know she cared so much made it much easier for me to continue my treatments as long as I did. The relationship that she had with my care team made my time there so much easier. In the end, I chose to stop my treatments. Ayesha made sure me and my family were thoroughly educated on the pros and cons of stopping treatment. I no longer see

Ayesha like I did in the past, but we will never forget the kindness, compassion, and humor she gave me during my time in her care. Until my time on this earth has ended, I will forever be grateful to and thankful for Ayesha and her team."

March 2022 - Sarah, RN

Sarah's nomination: "I got COVID in September and by early October I couldn't take it anymore and drove myself to Tri-County Hospital in Wadena. My oxygen was very low, as I also got pneumonia. They wanted me to go to St. Cloud and get put on a ventilator and I refused.

Sarah watched me faithfully and helped me breathe, adjusted my oxygen and helped me relax. She saved my life and definitely my sanity. I didn't ask her last name, but Sarah with blonde hair – loves peanut butter.

I can truly say as sick as I was that I met an angel when I went to Tri-County. Sarah is an amazing, talented woman! Thank you for letting me be blessed to have her!"

October 2022 – Melissa, LPN

Melissa's nomination: "Melissa was the one who helped me during one of the hardest times in my life. In January, I had a miscarriage of twins. We had waited and prayed for so long to have a baby that to hear that news of losing them was the hardest thing in the world. Melissa went above and beyond for all my appointments. She and Julie (Meyer, MD) were SO busy one day; they were seeing OB patients from another few doctors because they were all out with COVID. Even though they were so swamped, Melissa took the time to cry with me, hold my hand and give me a hug. She shared her own experiences and gave me so much comfort. She actually went above and beyond to message me the next day to make sure I was okay. She told me she had been thinking about me all night. She has walked me through every step of this journey. I absolutely would not be where I am today if it wasn't for her. Someone who loves and cares for her patient this much should be recognized. When we finally get another positive pregnancy test, I can't wait to finally call her up and tell her our news. There is no one I would rather have to help me through this journey than her. Please consider recognizing Melissa. She is the best!"

June 2023 – April, RN

April's nomination: "Some nurses are skillfully proficient, other nurses are efficiently precise, but once compassion is added to that, a nurse's connection with the patient becomes more deeply appreciated.

Such was my experience when I found myself in the emergency room. After the procedure, my care team included April, an outstanding, skillful nurse who guided me through bouts of pain and what to expect aftereffects would be. We conversed at length about our families and grandchildren, helping me to focus on comforting thoughts as an important part of my care.

April assisted me through an unfamiliar situation, she performed her duties so smoothly while we talked, it was more like a friend whom I knew forever. Her compassion never felt like something required, it was part of April's personality. I was extremely blessed to have her care for me."

November 2023 – Karen, RN

Karen's nomination: "Karen was working during the night I went into labor. She was not the primary OB nurse that shift, but she was working the med/surg floor at the time. My husband, Brandon, and I were scheduled for an induction on the morning of April 12, 2023, but our daughter decided to make her arrival all on her own, and we ended up coming in a little after midnight. As an employee of Astera Health and having worked with all the nursing staff for the past three years, I had no doubt we would be in excellent care. What Karen provided for us was exceptional! This was my first baby, so I was feeling all the emotions one should when they are about to give birth and become a parent for the first time. My husband, who is not a big fan of hospitals or the idea of anything that goes on in one, was probably more nervous than I was at the time. How Karen fits into our birth story goes something like this. My labor and delivery nurse had finished getting me admitted and had been monitoring my progress for a couple hours. She stepped back into our room and asked me if it was alright if Karen popped in to see how things were going. The answer was easy, it was "absolutely she can!" From then on, she was heaven-sent. Her calming personality and constant assurance were just what both my husband and I needed. Even though I was a patient at the time, I could not set my own nursing habits aside as I kept checking in on my husband to make sure he was doing okay. Karen really stepped in and helped him as well. Coaching both of us, reassuring us everything was going as it should and we would very soon meet our baby. Or what we thought would be soon. Soon, as in, by the end of the night shift. Shift change came, and we still had no baby, but we were close. Karen asked if we would mind if she stayed for the birth. Once again, another easy answer, of course. Yet again, thinking it would not be long before the baby arrived. Fast forward three hours and approaching the 10 o'clock hour, we finally met our baby, a little girl. Karen stayed the entire time. Even though her shift ended, and she clocked out at seven, she stood at my side, next to Brandon, making the entire room calm and inviting as we welcomed new life into the world. Only those who have worked twelve-hour night shifts would understand the exhaustion they can bring. For Karen, she not only worked an entire 12-hour shift the night we came into labor and delivery, but she also had to go home and find some time to sleep, only to come back the same night and do it all over again. There is no way I could have gone through the birthing process without her. My husband would agree with me, for his sake as well. Karen knew exactly what to say and when to say it. She is a profound nurse, and Astera Health is the luckiest organization to have her on their team. We had an outstanding group of nurses and our provider present, but I cannot think of my daughter's birthday without thinking of Karen. With my husband Brandon, my daughter Korbyn, and I would like to nominate Karen Helcl for a Daisy Award! I cannot think of anyone more deserving."

April 2024 – Emily, RN

Emily's nomination: "My 3-year-old daughter was having a very high fever, so I took her to the ER. While there, we were greeted by an incredibly kind nurse named Emily. She was so gentle with my daughter and after she did a couple of nose swabs, my daughter asked for a balloon. She took a glove and tried to blow it up. She was struggling and said she'd come back with one. After about 10 minutes, she came back with one for my excited daughter! She took the time to be kind and gentle with my daughter when she was feeling so sick, and I'm so thankful for that."