



SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED



NURSE AT VETERANS HOME AT CHIPPEWA FALLS BECOMES LEADER, MENTOR FOR OTHER STAFF

One of the things Tasha Arndt looks forward to the most is hearing and seeing how her care helped serve someone who dedicated their life to serving the United States.

Arndt, a registered nurse at the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls, started her career at the facility in July 2014 as a certified nursing assistant. Five years later, Arndt hasn't only grown as a nurse, but also as a friend and a leader.

"I always knew that I wanted to be a nurse," she said. "To do something that helps these people out who fought for our country and have done so much for me that I cannot repay...to be able to help them out now in their time of need gives me a lot of pride."

Arndt is from Tigerton, a small town located between Shawano and Wausau. She moved to the Chippewa Valley to pursue her aspirations of becoming a nurse, and she found a special home at the Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls.

It's a place she sought out to start her career partly because of her family's deep roots in the military — with multiple grandparents and uncles serving and her brother currently stationed in South Korea with the Air Force.

After starting as a certified nursing assistant while attending Chippewa Valley Technical College, Arndt's dedication and around-the-clock care led to a promotion to a licensed practical nurse. Last summer, Arndt officially fulfilled her dream and became a registered nurse at the Veterans Home. She's now attending the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire to obtain a bachelor's degree.

Arndt said that one of her favorite parts of her job is building relationships with the veterans who call the facility home.

"You walk in, they smile and they greet you right away," Arndt said of working at the Veterans Home. "They know you by name

and they remember you even though there are a lot of people working here and they see so many people every day.

"I love being able to talk to some of these people, not only about their war experiences, but their life experiences and seeing the pride they have for their work...they were so proud of their work no matter what they did — not just in the military. It's so nice to hear those stories and I feel like I have made a lot of friends with members."

Arndt said that a big reason she enjoys working at the facility isn't just the veterans who live there. It's also the incredible nursing staff she gets to call her teammates.

"I get excited when I go to work because I know whether it's a good day or a bad day, we're going to get through it together as a team," she said.

It's that camaraderie and sense of working together that's one of the things that sets the nursing staff apart from others. A 2018 study of more than 14,000 nursing homes by the *New York Times* found that the nursing staff at the Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls is rated among the best in the nation and perform "much above" the national average.

"The CNAs really help each other out and try to be as flexible as they can with each other," Arndt said. "I think that positively impacts the members here; there's such a good team and everyone keeps such a great attitude."

From where she started five years to where she is today, Arndt has appreciated the process and the work that's gone into it. She's gone from being the nursing student who had more than a few questions to ask to a mentor for some of the staff.

"I really enjoy that part," Arndt said. "I'm willing to share any wisdom I may have for being (at Chippewa Falls) for so long, especially CNAs that are going through nursing school like I did."

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