

Following Her Heart to Deliver Care Near Her Hometown

Andrea Gay never forgot the difference that nurses made for her grandfather.

Her grandfather, Andrew Gay of Hawesville, was diagnosed with cancer in early 1990. In April of that year, he wrote a letter to Readers' Write section of the local newspaper, the *Messenger-Inquirer*.

"Since I have never before been a patient in a hospital, needless to say I was quite scared because of some of the things I have

heard and read as to how people were mistreated, nurses being hateful and not coming when you call for them," he wrote.

But that wasn't his experience.

"I have never been treated with as much attention and TLC and I know a lot of this was above and beyond the call of duty. I was treated gently and with dignity. These wonderful nurses are indeed professionals and deserve all the praise I can give them,"

Andrew Gay wrote. "May God bless all the girls on the third floor. I love them all."

In November of that year, he lost his battle with cancer. Nearly 20 years later, his granddaughter Andrea Gay became a nurse herself, which she credits to the example set by her grandfather's caregivers.

"I spent a lot of time in the hospital here in Owensboro with my grandfather and seeing him and how much he loved his nurses made me



Andrea Gay

want to be a nurse," Gay said.

The path she took to becoming a nurse was definitely unconventional. Gay first earned a bachelor's degree in communications with an emphasis in public relations from the University of Southern Indiana. She did PR work for non-profit organizations that help needy children and families, but she decided it wasn't enough.

"After a couple years of doing that, there was still something missing, so I decided it wasn't too late," Gay said.

She earned her associate's in nursing from Owensboro Community & Technical College and first worked as a nurse extern on the oncology unit at Owensboro Health Regional Hospital. After a year there, she worked in the Intensive Care Unit for two years and then worked in surgery for six years. Along the way, she earned her master's in nursing from Frontier Nursing University in Hyden, Ky., which allowed her to become a family nurse practitioner this year.

"That's one of the reasons I wanted to become a nurse practitioner, to have more autonomy to be able to care for patients. It's exciting," Gay said.

Now, Gay is the new family nurse practitioner joining Owensboro Health Tell City. Being from Lewisport means seeing a lot of familiar faces, and that's one of the advantages, she said.

"I think it's going to be a great thing. I know these people, I'm from their community," Gay said. "I know their values, their ethics and their expectations. I know how they want to be treated, which is how I want to be treated."

Her previous experiences, especially in surgery, will also be useful.

"I have really close relationships with these surgeons and specialty physicians. I think that's going to be a tremendous help to me and my patients," Gay said. "I know who specializes in what and I can call them if I have questions."

Gay said she aims to have a lasting impact on her patients and their communities.

"My overall goal is to improve the health of my community and the communities that surround mine. If you improve the health of generation after generation, you improve the overall health of the community. It's a trickle-down effect," Gay said.

In her spare time, Gay enjoys swimming, traveling and she has worked previously in dog and animal rescues. She enjoys antiques and spending time with family.

—Submitted by Owensboro Health

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