

Tuscola alum returns home as a nurse practitioner

By Dominik Stallings

Kaci Helfrich is a new nurse practitioner at the Sarah Bush Lincoln clinic in Tuscola.

"This is the dream goal. It's been like a goal to become a nurse practitioner, but to have a job in my hometown and serve my community is very rewarding," said Helfrich.

Helfrich returned to Tuscola four years ago after graduating high school in 2012. She, along with her twin sister, Kara were valedictorians of that year.

The twins both work as nurse practitioners. When Helfrich was hired in Tuscola, she warned her patients and co-workers that if they saw someone who looked like her but didn't recognize them when approached, they might have met Kaci's sister, Kara. The two of them both live in Tuscola, but Kara works in Champaign.

"Kaci Helfrich always knew she wanted to enter the world of healthcare.

"My mom is a nurse, and so from a young age, I knew I wanted to do something in healthcare. As soon as I got out of high school, I got my CNA and worked as a CNA (certified



Kaci Helfrich

nursing assistant) for a year," said Helfrich.

During that year, she decided that she wanted to become a nurse, so she went to Parkland College to receive an associate of science. She later graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago, UIC College of Nursing in Champaign.

"So I went through school and worked alongside nurse practitioners. They were my role models," said Helfrich.

Nurse practitioners have backgrounds as nurses but they

also receive an advanced education that helps them provide similar services as a doctor. Nurse practitioners can assess, diagnose, order and interpret medical tests and prescribe medications.

Helfrich worked as a nurse for seven years, before earning her Master of Science in Nursing from the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at the Menonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University in Bloomington this May.

She started working at Sarah Bush Lincoln in August, working with Dr. Kim Whitaker.

Helfrich is able to diagnose and manage chronic conditions such as diabetes or high cholesterol, but also acute things, such as sore throats, coughs or injuries. As a Family medicine practitioner, she can see patients of any age, from newborns to geriatric patients.

Helfrich said she uses a holistic approach to care for her patients.

"I want my patients to know that I'm there to support them, but they're the leaders of their care," said Helfrich, "I'm their cheerleader... I want to support

them in their journey to health, whatever that journey looks like."

In Helfrich's experience, she's had patients who were worried that different procedures were pushed on them. She tries to educate her patients with the most up-to-date research but leaves it up to them how they pursue their health-care goals.

Helfrich is currently accepting new patients. Her office opens at 7:30 a.m. in order to give patients the opportunity to see her before work typically begins. She said she made the decision knowing that there are many hard-working people in Tuscola who have unique schedules.

Helfrich said the Tuscola clinic offers walk-ins, convenient care, endocrinology and occupational health twice a week. Helfrich said the clinic also offers same-day lab testing and X-rays, services that other clinics don't offer in the area.

"That's also important to me. To get specialists and family providers... Sarah Bush is trying to increase care in rural areas," said Helfrich.

During Helfrich's time as a nurse in southern Illinois, she worked in a rural area. She said it was an eye-opening experience when she realized that some patients traveled over an hour to receive care.

"So far I can't say enough good things about Sarah Bush. They're very caring for their employees and patients and the Tuscola Clinic is growing a lot," said Helfrich.

Since Helfrich grew up in Tuscola, she is familiar with the

town's culture, which helps her form better connections with her patients.

"I learn something from every single one of my patients... When I'm seeing patients, I'm seeing them holistically. I learn about their family and social aspects... Each person is their own puzzle; there's not just one thing going on," said Helfrich.

The Sarah Bush Lincoln clinic in Tuscola is located at 1100 Tuscola Boulevard and can be reached at 217-253-2020.

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TUSCOLA CLASS OF 1973 met at the Moose Club in Tuscola on Sept. 23 to celebrate their 50th class reunion. Front row, left to right: Peggy McCarty Dundas, Terri Weber Smith, Joyce Bowles Hall, Peggy Hinton Little, Teri Williams McGarigle, Cindy Morrow Ring, Marcia Deem, Barb Meyer Beals, Sally Kresin Henry, Susan Benner Bonham, Larayne Dallas. Second row, left to right: James Lee, Mary Rhoades Melton, Becky Smith Williams, Connie Miller Carlson, Pam Morris Sudduth, Rheanna Houser Merrell, Kathy Romine St Ledger, Gwen Small Morrow, Donna Hawkins Shepherd, Kim Tenney Zimmerman, Kim Dillon Lytle, Paula Karn. Third row: Richard Heath, Steve Hilgendorf, Bob Zimmerman, Marena Tunkin Scott, Leann Smith Spurlock, Kathy Hettinger Page, Trish Stahler Miller, Cynthia Bateman Einselen, Nena Clapp Richards, Jerie Wills, Gary Coslet, Lynn Munsey Schaefer, Rick Dallas, John O'Bryan, Jim Snider. Fourth row: Jim Mason, John Kalmar, David Volk, JC Sigler, Ron Elbin, Randy Todd, Dan Ochs, David Trinkle, Rob Meyer, Roger Galloway, Doug Dietrich, Brent Ochs. Not pictured: Rick Flock, Cathy Moody Chaplin. Photo by Dominik Stallings.



THE TUSCOLA HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1983 met Saturday evening at the Dan and Dena Meyer farm to celebrate their 40th class reunion, which included an old-school float in the parade, a golf outing, a meal at Monical's Pizza and a classmate's induction into the Hall of Fame. Pictured are, front row, left to right: Mika (Walker) Bowles, Amy (Ellington) McCollom, Diane (Kohlbecker) Kauffman, Shawna (Bean) Bosch, Mark Smalling, Dan Meyer, John Kleiss, David Shaw, David Porter, Scott Day. Second row: Stacy (Huber) Penny, David Creek, Dawn (Benson) Scatterday, Scott Martin, Kim (Ryan) Pankau, Duff Hoel, Dedee (Cothron) Hoel, Denise (Branch) Groves, Kim (Kidwell) Miller, Jennie (Quinn) Porter, Kim (Griffith) Kemp. Back row: Gary Goodwin, Jim Clarkson, Brad Hunt, Joe Farlow, Doug Maltby, John Brookins, Mark Smith, Nate Izquierdo, Bruce Bird, Colleen (Hartman) Hammel, Todd Becker, Deke Walker, Tom Peach, Chris Connerty, Mike Bergner, Brian Harris. Not pictured but arriving later are Mike Stahler and Kevin and Susan (Kresin) Quinn. Photo by Dominik Stallings.



CHURCH DIRECTORY

<p>Camargo United Methodist Church 103 E. Main Street Camargo, IL 61919 Church—832-9388 e-mail: umccamargo@gmail.com Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Pastor - Lenny Summar Traditional Worship - 9:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship 10:30 "Come just as you are to worship" Open Communion first Sunday of each month Prayer Group - Meets after Sunday Service.</p> <p>First Baptist Church 300 E Dagg, Tuscola Pastor: Mike Wilder Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m. 217-417-6842</p> <p>First Christian Church (Non-Denominational) "Come Rejoice With Us" 701 N. Sycamore St. Villa Grove, Illinois Phone(217)832-5231 Fax (217)832-9348 Website: www.fccvg.com E-mail: fccvg@frontier.com Minister- Mike Zylstra E-mail: fccvgmin@frontier.com Open communion observed weekly Morning Worship Service: 9:30 a.m. Sunday School (all ages) 10:45 a.m. Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group 1st & 3rd Sundays 6:00 p.m.</p> <p>First Christian Church 100 E. Church St., Tuscola 253-2394 Sunday Worship services: 8:00 & 10:30 a.m. Sunday school: 9:15 a.m. Youth Group 7th-12th @ 6:33 Sundays After school program 5th-6th girls, Wednesdays www.fccuscola.com</p> <p>Tuscola United Methodist Church 901 N. Prairie Ave. 253-4232 Sunday Worship Services: 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>First United Pentecostal Church 1 South Pine Street, Villa Grove Wheelchair Accessible Where Lives are Changed! Pastor Jerry L. Conner Church 832-7071 • Residence 832-8577 Sunday School—10:00 a.m. Worship Service—10:00 a.m. Evening Evangelistic Service—6:30 p.m. Monday, 1st one of each month Ladies Auxiliary, 7:00 p.m. Monday—Friday Ladies Prayer Group—9:00 a.m. Tuesday Youth Service—7:00-8:00 p.m. Thursday Bible Study—7:30 p.m. Free Home Bible Study We welcome you to worship with us in all of our services</p> <p>Forty Martyrs Catholic Church 201 E. Van Allen St Tuscola, IL 61953 Pastor: Rev. Angel Sierra Office Phone: 217.253.4412 Sacrament of Confession: Saturdays 5:00 pm Or by appointment by calling the church office: 217.253.4412 Week-day Mass Times: 8:00 am Monday, Thursday & Friday Weekend Masses: 5:30 pm Saturday 8:00 am Sunday</p> <p>Immanuel Lutheran Church 600 E Northline Rd. Tuscola, IL 61953 217-253-4341 Services: Saturday 5:30 pm Sunday 9:00 am</p> <p>Sacred Heart Catholic Church 208 N. Pine Stret, Villa Grove Pastor -Rev. Aloy Ndeanafo Office: 832-8352 Hours: M-F 8:30am-1:30pm Email: villagrovehume@gmail.com website: sacredheartandstmichael.com Mass Times: Saturday: 4pm Sunday 10:00am Sunday @ St. Michaels in Hume 8:00am PSR: Sunday 9:00-9:45 am</p>
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