



Nurse Builds Meaningful Relationships, Looks to Future at Brookdale

For nurse Whitney Allen, the residents of Brookdale Texarkana aren't simply people in her care. "They, their children and their grandchildren – they're all family to me," she said. The opportunity to develop enduring personal relationships with those in her charge is what prompted the 27-year-old to dedicate her career to seniors.

Brookdale Texarkana is an assisted living community with 38 residents. Allen, a nursing graduate of Texarkana College, has served as its health and wellness director since December, 2014. Her position is a departure from more traditional nurse work, such as hospital service, that centers on hands-on care. Allen is a key leader at Brookdale Texarkana, managing and making strategic decisions about the community's direction and culture.

Among her daily duties are leading the 10 resident care associates who provide direct care, conducting resident health assessments, overseeing medication management and, along with the community's executive director, helping to hire and train new team members. Building relationships is central to her work.

"I talk to residents' families all the time," she said. "Not only do I let them know if there is a change in their loved one's health status, I will call when positive things happen. When a resident begins to blossom here, make new friends, get involved in new activities, I let their families know."

Most important to Allen is creating bonds with the seniors. "When I arrive in the morning, I go into the dining room where they are having breakfast and help pass out coffee so I can say hello to everyone and see how they are. If a resident isn't there, I check to see if they are all right. Sometimes what someone needs is a hug to let them know they are loved."

Allen, the mother of two young daughters and a CrossFit enthusiast, says Brookdale is a place where she can make her career. "I like the idea of moving ahead. The health and wellness director before me was promoted and so was our community's executive director. Seeing that inspires you and gives you confidence that you can move forward, as well."

She has suggested to other nurses that they consider working at Brookdale. "This company is concerned about its associates and does what's needed to help us succeed. Brookdale really makes us feel appreciated."

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