



Brookdale Nurses are Leaders in Caring

Nursing is about caring and at Brookdale, nurses care by leading. Hired as health and wellness directors at the company's senior living communities, they have the opportunity to set strategic direction, manage others, advance their careers and improve life for the aging and their families.

"This is not your traditional nursing position," said Kim Estes, R.N., senior vice president of clinical services at Brookdale. "You aren't on a floor directly taking care of patients. This is a leadership role, in which you oversee a team caring for seniors who aren't considered patients; they are residents. Their Brookdale community is their home. Your focus is on enhancing their health and wellness so each can live to their optimum capacity."

Especially fulfilling are the relationships built by being an integral part of the seniors' lives. "It's different than a hospital setting, where patients are there temporarily," Estes said. "Because our residents live at our communities, you get to know them very well. They become part of your extended family. There is a tremendous feeling of satisfaction when you see the difference you and your team make for them."

Nurses with an interest in leading others and a passion for seniors are an excellent match for the position, even if they don't have management experience. Brookdale's 12-week orientation for health and wellness directors, who are known as HWDs, provides the leadership skills needed to succeed.

"It's a blended learning program combining webinars, coaching calls, site visits and on line learning guided by the clinical learning specialist in partnership with their district nurse, said Jeffin Dejanovich Bush, the Brookdale clinical learning specialist facilitating the program's pilot. "We also have a great clinical microsite that clearly explains policies and procedures and details all the components of their role. We really help our nurses gain the business acumen they need to not only be successful clinicians, but to also be successful leaders of the business operations aspect of their communities."

The potential for advancement abounds, said Estes, who began her career as an HWD.

"As you perfect your role, there are opportunities to go to sister communities and mentor other HWDs who may be new at this," she said. "As you grow, you may get to the point where you have responsibility for many different sites. Brookdale is in 47 states with more than 1,120 communities, so there is wonderful opportunity. If someone had told me at the beginning of my career that I would be where I am today, I wouldn't have believed it, but my experience shows it is possible."

We enrich lives every day.