

## Nurses Have a Heart of Gold

Palm Healthcare

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The 'Thank a Nurse' planning committee.

Palm Healthcare Foundation's charitable purpose is to improve the health and well-being of residents of Palm Beach County.

Residents of Palm Beach County are aging at faster-than-ever rates, and the demand for healthcare is soaring here and across the country. In the next 15 years, one out of every five people in our community will become a senior citizen, and 80 percent of those seniors will have a chronic health condition. All of us will need nurses.

Palm Healthcare Foundation, a public charity, has been prioritizing funding for nursing initiatives since its inception in 2001, when it was created by the sale of Good Samaritan and St. Mary's Medical Centers. Over the past 15 years, Palm Healthcare Foundation has donated more than \$10 million to nursing initiatives designed to advance the field of nursing.

The funding has supported nursing scholarships, certifications and leadership classes. In fact, more than \$1 million in nursing scholarships has been granted to more than 1,000 nursing students for advanced education — so that Palm Beach county residents will have quality nursing care when they most need it.

## **Nursing Shortage Still Exists and is Growing**

Somewhere between 155,000 and 200,000 new nurses enter the field every year in the U.S. 230,000 new positions open every year nationwide. Already, demand outpaces supply. To further complicate the matter, more than 700,000 nurses are expected to retire by 2024. The nursing shortage still exists and is getting worse.

Unfortunately, there are not enough nursing faculty members to teach the students who wish to enter the field. Almost 80,000 nursing students were turned away from entering U.S. nursing programs in 2012. This combination of an increasing aging population with health needs, a shortage of new graduates and a lack of faculty to teach more nurses creates a magnified problem for Florida.

Palm Healthcare Foundation has addressed this problem by providing grants to local schools of nursing to start new nursing degree programs – like masters and PhD programs at Florida Atlantic University, Palm Beach State College and Palm Beach Atlantic University.

## **Looking to the Future of Community-Based Nursing Care**

In recent years, Palm Healthcare Foundation and its partners have been dedicated to preparing our community's nurses for new ways healthcare is being delivered – in community-based settings, home visits and other technologically assisted venues. Today, its work around nursing advancement seeks to ensure that Palm Beach County has a highly skilled nursing workforce that provides care across all settings and supports optimal health in the community including care transitions and care coordination, community-based nursing and scholarships and continuing education/professional development.

The foundation also recently established an innovative program called the Volunteer Nurse Corps. In a grant to Palm Beach Atlantic University, a volunteer nurse corps mobilizes retired, volunteer and student nurses to help administer community care and home visits.

## **National Nurses Week is May 6-12**

Palm Healthcare Foundation's work in the area of nursing is critical, but nurses are the ones with hearts of gold. To honor our community's nurses, Palm Healthcare Foundation leads a Thank A Nurse campaign every year around National Nurses Week, May 6-12.

The campaign encourages residents to nominate their favorite nurses at [ThankaNurseToday.com](http://ThankaNurseToday.com). Area nurses are invited to celebrate National Nurses Week at the free Nurses Night Out event Thursday, May 4 at Downtown at the Gardens.

On Thursday, May 11, Palm Healthcare Foundation and Thank a Nurse sponsors, Tenet Health and VITAS Healthcare, host the Heart of Gold recognition event at the Kravis Center. Heart of Gold sponsors include TrustBridge, E.M. Lynn Foundation, Keiser University, Florida Atlantic University, Lynda Harris Certified Legal Nurse Consultant, ManorCare and Palm Beach Atlantic University.

For more information on Palm Healthcare Foundation's nursing programs and other initiatives, please visit [PalmHealthcare.org](http://PalmHealthcare.org).