



NEWS RELEASE

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Chattanooga State Nursing Students Strengthen Experience and Build Skills During Pandemic

By Betty A. Proctor, Chattanooga State

April 22, 2021 (Chattanooga, TN) --- Chattanooga State's Nursing Program prepares students to be registered nurses to help meet current and emerging needs in the workplace; however, an unexpected pandemic in 2020 added an entirely new layer of urgency for the program, helping to further prepare students for their future in healthcare.

As the pandemic raged and agencies raced to provide testing availability, it wasn't until the last half of 2020 that accurate tests were ready and Chattanooga State's nursing department was asked to help with COVID testing at the former Alstom plant. Associate Professor Marie Loisy and Instructor Brittany Willams have been coordinating the student rotations but noted that the entire project was a "team effort" between program Director Dr. Martina Harris, faculty colleagues, and the county health department, who discussed ways to make it work.

Each week, since fall 2020, approximately 16-30 students from first- and second-year day and night nursing classes have participated in this project, which has now advanced to include administering COVID-19 vaccinations at River Park, CARTA bus barn, and Enterprise South that began in early February 2021.

"I learned more about the process of public health and how that aspect of nursing functions while also learning skills and patient-centered care," stated Michael Kaloi, while Taylor Gladson agreed and added, "I loved to see this aspect of community nursing."

Understanding the difference between the anxiety of patients coming for testing who were worried about being positive and now seeing the hope that vaccinations bring, made this experience "an exceptional privilege," said Christine Doyle.

Jenny Wise shared that she now felt very comfortable giving injections and realized the importance of ensuring proper administration. "This is a historical event for the world, and it meant a lot to be a part of it."

"The Nursing program at Chattanooga State has been preparing area nurses for their work in healthcare for decades," explained Dr. Rebecca Ashford, Chattanooga State president. "So, preparing future nurses to work in a pandemic situation is not something we *expected* to do, but we were prepared to do. These future nurses will have one more set of experiences and skills that will serve our community well as they transition to their careers."

Chattanooga State's nursing program was recently ranked #1 by Nursing Schools Almanac for best associate degrees in nursing in Tennessee. For more information, call (423) 697-4450 or visit chattanoogastate.edu/nursing-rn-aas-day-and-night-programs-baroness-erlanger-nursing-program-chattanooga-state



PHOTO CUTLINE:

Chattanooga State night nursing students with their supervisor work the front lines preparing to administer COVID-19 vaccines at the CARTA bus barn.