# Leadership Stories: This has been a heck of a year to be the Year of the Nurse!



Roberta Patterson, MSN RN

Marion IL VAMC

**Ms. Roberta Patterson serves as the Nurse Executive at the Marion IL VA Medical Center. Herself a Veteran, Ms. Patterson nursed in the US Army and served as a staff nurse after her separation from the service. The inadequate leadership she encountered after her military experience caused her to leave nursing and obtain an Associate’s degree in Mechanical Engineering. Even in this new field, Patterson missed the holistic perspective of the nursing profession and returned to it after 3 years. She enjoyed the challenging assignments she undertook, and she cherished the direct care role of nursing staff. She particularly commented on the joy of seeing immediate outcomes when working in direct care. She also fully recognizes the mental acuity required to be an effective professional nurse. She states, “Nurses are at the bedside; we have that extra time that physicians don’t get. In the middle of the night we hear our patients’ deepest thoughts. There is no higher calling you can have, in nursing, you really see evidence of your work.”**

**Ms. Patterson became interested in nursing leadership due to the mentoring she received from leaders she encountered. This exchange became a defining moment of her career and led her to taking on the role of mentor to other nurse leaders. She enjoys the time spent with aspiring leaders and the desire of these rising leaders to create change. Ms. Patterson will often reference the inadequate leadership in her early career that caused her to leave nursing and she shares the lessons learned from that experience with new leaders. Throughout her career, she has remained cognizant of the informal leadership role held by many nurses, and she encourages leaders to listen to the staff to ensure that nurses who deliver excellent care can continue to find fulfillment in the direct care role. This display of servant leadership by Ms. Patterson is a part of her legacy.**

**Ms. Patterson is an advocate for spending time outside of work on self-care. She enjoys readings on healthcare, leadership, and a host of other topics. She also enjoys activities that keep her mind active. She fully supports the need to provide self-care opportunities for front-line workers, particularly during COVID-19. Ms. Patterson strongly believes that one cannot assume all the team members are functioning well. Spending time with each employee or team member is critical to maintaining motivation. She encourages the use of time away to ensure each person has the mental reserve to think clearly and to be able provide outstanding care and/or leadership.**

**Ms. Patterson sums up the Year of the Nurse by commenting**, “This has been a heck of a year to be the Year of the Nurse!”.

11/13/20