

50 Years of Hiawatha Homes



A Nurse a Day Keeps the Doctor Away!

May 2026

Each year, we celebrate our hard working, dedicated nursing staff during National Nurses Week. The national celebration is held every May, concluding on May 12, the birthday of the pioneering nurse, Florence Nightingale.



Since Hiawatha Homes opened its doors as the Hiawatha Children's Home, we have emphasized the critical importance of quality nursing care in the fulfillment of our mission. Pat Butters RN, our first nursing director, understood that the individuals we support can have unique needs. Pat always stressed the importance of providing professional nursing not care to all. She established a high standard of care that is still followed to this day.

As Hiawatha Homes evolved from a children's home to an adult home, the medical needs of our individuals changed as well, making the nursing care we provide more complex, and more crucial. Currently, Hiawatha Homes has 12 nurses. Our nursing director Rebecca Civil RN oversees this tremendous group who provide daily assessments and care to individuals we support in our homes and in-home family services.



Pat Butters, right, pictured here with former nurse Linda Armagost, was Hiawatha Homes' first director of nursing. only to the nursing staff, but to the direct support professionals (DSPs), forming a team that delivers consistent yet personalized care in the home and frequently obviating the need for an emergency department visit.

Hiawatha Homes' protocols were first established by Pat Butters 50 years ago. These protocols are available

Rebecca stresses the importance of algorithms that are used across all the homes – standard protocols which outline how to evaluate and care for almost any medical need that might arise. For example, how to evaluate an injury, or how to properly care for an indwelling urinary catheter.

The COVID pandemic tested the effectiveness of that model of teamwork – and the nursing and DSP staff rose to the occasion!

DSPs were trained in tasks previously relegated to nursing, such as checking vital signs and doing minor dressing changes.

They shared responsibilities, improvised, and worked a lot of overtime. As a result, our individuals were cared for in a professional manner throughout the pandemic.

Their daily responsibilities are as unique as the individuals we support. Nurses are assigned by house and can even be assigned to individuals with needs that best match their experience and interest.



During National Nurses Week, we gifted each of our nursing staff succulents that will brighten their day. Pictured here is Rebecca Civil, Hiawatha Homes' Nursing Director.

Hiawatha Homes nurses must utilize a broad range of medical and communication skills. Some of their responsibilities include:

- Working closely with providers and the house coordinators to organize appointments and implement treatment plans.
- Accompanying the individuals to all of their appointments with their providers. Providers rely heavily on the nursing staff to describe current problems and provide medical background and history.
- Developing individualized care plans.
- Contribute and maintain a review entitled "About Me," for each individual. This summary has their physical, medical, and emotional needs readily available to all staff.
- Keeping family members and case managers apprised of the status of individuals with active problems.
- Educating other staff members.
- On-call availability 24/7 for simple questions and emergencies.
- Critically, advocating for our individuals.

Providers often comment on the superb quality of care our nursing staff provides for our individuals. What are the qualities that make a good Hiawatha Homes nurse?

- Broad nursing expertise.
- Attention to detail.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Good communication skills across a wide variety of platforms. Many of our individuals are non-verbal or use adaptive communication technology.
- The ability to work autonomously, but also as part of a larger team.
- Empathy and patience.
- On-call availability 24/7 for simple questions and emergencies.
- A strong sense of mission and service.

And the rewards?

Our nurses value the long-term relationships they establish with the individuals we support and their families.

They really know the individuals and can deliver truly personalized care.

Illness, emergency department visits, and hospital stays cause anxiety for us all, but especially for those who may not be able to articulate their fears.

It is comforting for them to have a familiar, trusted nurse from their homes by their sides.

Developing and maintaining that trust with the individuals we support was emphasized by Pat Butters 50 years ago, and continues to be a guiding principle at Hiawatha Homes.



Nurse Stacy Lenz stops for a photo during National Nurses Week in 2024.

I want to support 50 more years!

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