

# Texas Health GME welcomes 60 PCT apprenticeships pave way to nursing careers

## Eight new nurses at Texas Health Fort Worth started with program



Nicole Riedel, R.N., had a theater background and had traveled the world managing entertainment for a cruise line when the COVID-19 pandemic gave her time to take another look at what she wanted in life. Alexis Lozano, R.N., was preparing for a career as a veterinarian when she changed paths.

The calling to become a nurse came at different stages for eight new nurses at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth. But they all used Texas Health Resources University's earn-as-you-learn Fast Track Patient Care Technician (PCT) Apprentice Program as an entry point. The program covers training expenses, and entities pay the salaries of the apprentices while they are in it.

"These young nurses wisely saw the apprenticeships as a path to nursing and wholeheartedly pursued their calling," said Mark Morales, chief talent officer. "The program and their passion for healthcare combined to support Texas Health's Mission of helping the people in the communities we are privileged to serve."

- Ameri Clark, B.S.N., R.N., has "had healthcare in mind since before I could remember." She learned about the PCT apprenticeship program through her aunt, Gretchen Clark, M.S.N., RNC-OB, C-ONQS, NEA-BC, who is system service line director of Women's, Infants and Children's Services. Now Clark works in a neurology telemetry unit at the hospital.
- Alex Garcia, R.N., was in construction when he entered the apprenticeship at the suggestion of a friend and co-worker who had shifted to healthcare after entering the PCT program. Garcia found he wanted to provide a higher level of care as a nurse.
- Gabrielle Hood, B.S.N., R.N., had planned to finish nursing school out of state, when COVID hit. She returned home to Texas and when she found the PCT program on an online job listing app, she decided it would be her path to nursing.
- Kyrstan Pigrum, R.N., already had a bachelor's degree in science and had considered becoming a physician's assistant. She came upon a listing for the PCT program and decided it would be a great way to begin building her background in healthcare.
- Rachel Little, B.S.N., R.N., knew she wanted to be a nurse and has worked for about two years in the Texas Health Fort Worth Emergency Department (ED) since completing her PCT apprenticeship. "I don't think I'd be here if it were not for the PCT program," she said.
- Steven West, R.N., was taking the prerequisites for nursing school and knew he wanted to be an emergency department nurse. "And I wanted to make sure I secured a spot in the department that I liked in order to become an R.N. in that department," he said. West started his residency in the Texas Health Fort Worth ED four months ago.

"We are thrilled to have these dedicated new nurses caring for patients across the hospital," said Jennifer Chavez, D.N.P., R.N., ACNP-BC, NEA-BC, CCRN, chief nursing officer at Texas Health Fort Worth. "I know from personal experience how helpful it is to use Texas Health's programs to get a nursing education and pursue a career."

Heather Cawood, B.S.N., R.N., is program coordinator for the apprenticeships at Texas Health Fort Worth. She also handles other roles, including nursing supervisor leadership development, student clinical placements and nursing internships.

Cawood said she enjoys being a resource for the apprentices and other young potential nurses she works with.

"Nursing is such a great career," she said. "There's so much you can do with it, and they might have nursing in their mind but they need someone to tell them what is possible. I love to teach and mentor."