



**Working
as a Nurse
Is More Than
a Job;
It Is an**

by Mary Ann Hutcheson

HONOR

Nurses Honor Guard of South Carolina

The level of dedication from our nurses, especially during the pandemic, has gone above and beyond all expectations. Nursing is a vocation, not just a job. Those who perform the tasks of a nurse did not sign up just for the paycheck. Midlands Nurse Kerry Glasser says she was never without her play doctor's bag and stethoscope as a child – and her strong desire to serve as a nurse has never wavered. Today, she works full time as a nurse while also volunteering for a worthy cause.

Several years ago, Glasser learned of the South Carolina chapter of a national program, called the Nurses Honor Guard. The South Carolina program was established in 2019 in the Greenville area of the Upstate by Registered Nurse Stormy Shealy. The program is a recognition ceremony performed by nurses who wish to honor their fellow nurses by paying tribute to them at the time of their death.

An Irmo native and full-time registered nurse (RNC), Glasser traveled to the Upstate to attend Honor Guard tributes and was deeply moved by the impact the ceremony had on loved ones' families as well as on participating volunteer nurses. The 501© nonprofit program eventually extended to the Midlands, Grand Strand/Pee Dee, and Low Country areas of the state. Glasser, now the Lead Guard Member for our Midlands area, has been working hard locally to build participation and recognition for this volunteer organization.

Glasser's tireless efforts to get the word out to prospective Midlands volunteers included writing letters to local churches and media services. Dressed in full uniform, she visited over 50 funeral homes in the Midlands to acquaint them with the Nurses Honor Guard. One of our local radio stations mentioned the organization during a recent broadcast. She notes that, whenever the Honor Guard has provided a service in this area, the contact is often through word of mouth and/or colleagues. Her tireless dedication to building our local chapter is exceptional.

"Many locals don't know we're here.



Sometimes, one of our colleagues has heard about us or attended a funeral we were at," she says.

The local group is looking to spread the word. The organization welcomes active or retired male and female nurses, licensed in good standing, in the State of South Carolina, and volunteers are needed for the Midlands chapter. Occasionally, when there is a shortage of volunteers from this area, volunteers from the Upstate and/or the Low Country have been asked to fill in and help perform a service here.

Nightingale Tribute at the funeral or memorial service. This service, steeped in tradition, is similar to a military tribute and officially releases the nurse from her nursing duties. The Nurses Honor Guard of South Carolina attends all services wearing the traditional white uniform, cap, and cape. The volunteer nurses stand guard at the casket, or urn if requested, and provide a presence at the services. They place a white rose on the casket or urn to signify the nurse's devotion to her profession and to show appreciation for their nursing colleague. They then

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Student nurses can also join but cannot participate until they graduate.

After they perform their first service, nurse volunteers earn a nursing honor guard pin at a ceremony as a small but important reminder that they are valued and respected. Kerry Glasser says that a first-time volunteer only has to attend one ceremony to become drawn to return.

What Is the Nurses Honor Guard?

The ceremonial tribute is offered free of charge for any South Carolina resident who has been an RN, LPN, NP, CRNA, or CNM who holds a nursing license, active or retired, from the state of South Carolina.

The ceremony pays tribute to nurses at the time of their death by performing the

recite the Nightingale Tribute at the funeral or memorial service, followed by the presentation of the Florence Nightingale lamp to the family.

"We want the family to have those good memories," Glasser says. "We give them the lamp to let them know that their loved one made a difference, and that we recognize the sacrifices they, as the supportive family, made as well."

Glasser shares the significance of the Nightingale Lamp:

The Florence Nightingale Lamp used in the service represents Florence Nightingale, who was known as the "Lady with the Lamp. She earned this title because she would visit soldiers at night with a small lantern in her hand to tend to their inju-

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ries during the Crimean War in the 1850s. Many wounded soldiers were saved due to her pioneering nursing works and laid the foundation for professional nursing today. The lantern is a symbol of comfort and courage and of lighting the way to modern, professional nursing. This lamp will be given to the family as a memento, similar to how every veteran receives a U.S. flag.

The final – and most poignant part of the ceremony – is what is called the Last Call to Duty. A Nightingale Lamp is lit in the nurse's honor and her name and is called out with a request to report to duty. The name is called out three times, and a bell is rung after each call. After the last call, the lamp's flame is extinguished, symbolizing that the nurse's tasks are complete, her duty is done, and she can now go home in peace.

Glasser shares that the ceremony creates profound emotions in the room for everyone present, including the nurses. The family members are not alone in their loss; the nurses are there in fellowship.

In her presentation about the Guard, Glasser writes:

You may see us shed a few tears as we bid farewell to one of our own, but for us it is an honor and a privilege for the Nurses Honor Guard to be able to give tribute to a nurse who gave her whole life to caring for others. We not only want to show our respect and appreciation to our fellow nurses, but we also want to honor the families that gave in their own ways. We want them to know the impact their loved one made.

Join the Nurses Honor Guard of South Carolina

If applying to join, please fill out the form at the bottom of the Honor Guard webpage. (<https://www.nurseshonorguard.com/>) Without these answers, they cannot process your request for membership.

The organization offers its services throughout the state of South Carolina and



The Nightingale Pledge

I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly, to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug. I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician, in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.

is a 501© (3) nonprofit organization. It is staffed strictly by volunteer nurses. Volunteering is not just for retired nurses. It can offer a satisfying way to tap into the caring, emphatic, resourceful, and compassionate natures that carry nurses through a demanding and challenging profession.

Request a Ceremonial Tribute for a Family Member

This ceremonial tribute is offered free of charge for any South Carolina resident who is a registered nurse, nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, licensed practical nurse, or anyone active or retired, and who holds a nursing license in good standing with the Board of Nursing from their home state or

the state of South Carolina. Check out our short video: (<https://youtu.be/MMibMk-863MY>)

To request our services, please visit our webpage at (www.NursesHonorGuard.com), scroll down the page, and fill out the online form or contact one of the following:

Regional Leads:

- Kerry Glasser RNC and Toni Crawford LPN, Midlands
- Stormy Shealy RN, Lena Warner RN, and Julie Schlecht RN, Upstate
- Beth Edwards LPN, Charity Herring RN, Pamela Sims DeRuvo RN. and Pam Stroud RN, Grand Strand/Pee Dee
- Lynne Malden RN and Adrianna Fox Deise RN, Low Country/Charleston ■

