

Honoring the nurse victims of COVID-19



WE at *American Nurse Journal* want to acknowledge the nurses and other healthcare workers who have given their lives to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses, physicians, and first responders tend to garner the most media attention, but let's not forget the many others who also are essential for saving patients' lives, including nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, patient transport and environmental services staff, social workers, unit secretaries, and many more.

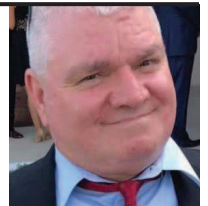
"Lost on the Frontline," a collaboration between Kaiser Health News (KHN)* and *The Guardian*, recognizes the sacrifices of these giving people. Here we reprint a portion of the write-ups for some of the many nurses who have died. We recognize this is far from a complete list, but it serves to remind us of what we've lost—individuals who cared about others and who leave their unfinished dreams and plans behind, along with friends, colleagues, and families.

For the full profiles, visit the Lost on the Frontline website at khn.org/news/lost-on-the-frontline-health-care-worker-death-toll-covid19-coronavirus.

John Abruzzo, RN, 62

John developed strong friendships with patients, said Susan Knoepffler, Huntington Hospital's chief nursing officer. "He had a winning smile. He was kind of a teddy bear," she said. He had a daughter, son, and three grandchildren. His wife died 8 days after John (likely from complications related to type 1 diabetes).

— *James Faris*



Debbie Accad, RN, 72

Divina "Debbie" had cared for veterans for over 25 years and was set to retire in April. But after contracting the novel coronavirus, she spent her final 11 days on a ventilator—and didn't survive. "She died doing what she loved most," her son Mark said. "That was caring for people." — *Melissa Bailey*



Romeo Agtarap, RN, 63

Romeo was a dedicated emergency department nurse. He had spent 20 years at what his wife, Joy, said was his "dream job" at the New-York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center. "Working there was the proudest accomplishment of his life," she said. — *Anna Jean Kaiser*



Felicia Ailende, RN, 67

An immigrant from Nigeria, Felicia planted a garden each year and used the produce to cook West African dishes. When there were too many cucumbers, hot peppers, or greens, she shared with neighbors. At Bria of Forest Edge, a nursing home, Felicia cooked for residents at times or prayed for them, her son Elijah Ailende said. — *Christina Jewett*



Quen Agbor Ako, RN, 53

Quen was known to wear stylish, bright clothing and break out in song and dance. Born in Cameroon, she worked as a guidance counselor and teacher before coming to the United States, where she earned her nursing degree. — *Anna Jean Kaiser*

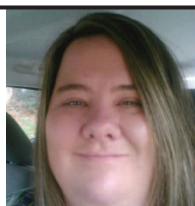
Jerry Alford, LPN, 60

Jerry was a stickler for maintaining a sterile workspace and never passed on the chance to lighten a co-worker's load. — *Suzannah Cavanaugh*



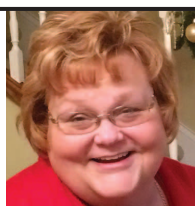
Jennifer Anderson-Davis, LPN, 44

As a single mother, Jennifer was determined to give her three children everything they needed, so she pursued her nursing degree while delivering pizza to make ends meet. "She always did the best that she could to give them the best life," her brother Earl Anderson said. — *Cara Anthony*



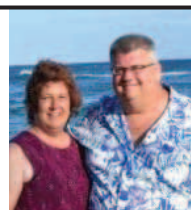
Marsha Bantle, RN, 65

Even while hospitalized, Marsha was selfless, said Shay Gould, the ICU nurse who cared for her. She offered to turn off her medication pump to save the nurse a trip. She asked for other patients' names to pray for them. — *Michelle Crouch*



Jeff Baumbach, RN, 57

Jeff was a seasoned nurse of 28 years when the novel coronavirus began to circulate in California. Hepatitis and tuberculosis had been around over the years but never posed a major concern. Jeff and his wife, Karen Baumbach, also a nurse, initially didn't consider it significantly riskier than challenges they'd faced for years. He would wage a difficult and steady fight against the virus that ended with a sudden collapse. — *Christina Jewett*



Dorothy Boles, LPN, 65

"She went over, above and beyond," said Glory Boyd, Greenwood Leflore Hospital's chief nursing officer and Dorothy's friend. "She cared for other people before she cared for herself." When patients leaving the hospital didn't have the means to recover on their own, Dorothy opened her home to them. — *Michaela Gibson Morris*



Linda Bonaventura, LPN, 45

Even on bad days, Linda's lighthearted sense of humor made people feel better, her sister Alisa Bowens said. "We like to say she was laughter," Bowens said. "She lit up the room." — *Cara Anthony*



Brittany Bruner-Ringo, LVN, 32

"She always made the best of things," Brittany's mother, Kim Bruner, said. "It could be the saddest day, and she could make you laugh." — *Samantha Young*



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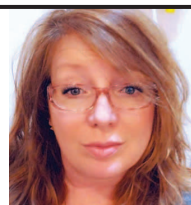
Araceli Buendia Ilagan, RN, 63

“She was one of the smartest people I ever knew,” said Jhoanna Mariel Buendia, Araceli’s niece. Araceli encouraged Jhoanna to become a nurse. — *Danielle Renwick*



Karen Carmello, LPN, 57

Karen had an intimate understanding of working with intellectually disabled patients. Her 26-year-old son, Steven, has autism. — *Shoshana Dubnow*



Rosary Celaya Castro-Olega, RN, 63

Rosary wasn’t what you’d call shy. At her daughter’s basketball games, she was the loudest voice in the bleachers. She dressed head-to-toe in purple: purse, glasses, phone, scrubs. She was Kobe Bryant’s No. 1 fan. And she loved sharing stories with patients. — *Maureen O’Hagan*



Sheila Faye Christian, RN, 66

Sheila was a superstar at the center where she worked for 26 years and among those who knew her. She was the kind of person who brought lunch to a new coworker and hosted a baby shower for someone without close family, according to her daughter and a memorial board. — *JoNel Aleccia*



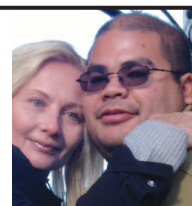
Susan Cicala, RN, 60

Reminiscing on Facebook, colleagues said Susan talked about her two children constantly. She loved to travel to Disney World and national parks and saw vacations as opportunities to learn about the world beyond New Jersey—on a trip to Hawaii, she delved into the attack on Pearl Harbor. — *Maureen O’Hagan*



Christopher Dean, LPN, 37

“He was always optimistic, full of life,” said Natalya Kubaevskaya, Christopher’s wife of 10 years. “And he had a big heart.” — *Katja Ridderbusch*



Karla Dominguez, RN, 33

“She was so full of joy, so happy with her work,” said Carlos Dominguez, a doctor and Karla’s father. She wore scrubs with cartoon Minions and managed to connect with even the most challenging patients. — *Maureen O’Hagan*



Daisy Doronila, RN, 60

Daisy had a different perspective than most who worked at the Hudson County Correctional Facility, a New Jersey lockup 11 miles from Manhattan. It was a place where the veteran nurse could put her Catholic faith into action, showing kindness to marginalized people. — *Christina Jewett*



Lisa Ewald, RN, 53

Lisa was a nurse to many living things, human and otherwise. When her neighbor Alexis Fernandez's border collie had a stomach blockage, Lisa hooked the dog up to an I.V. four times a day. "She was this dedicated nurse who nursed my dog back to health," Alexis said. Lisa also loved gardening, aerospace, and comic book conventions. — *Melissa Bailey*



Barbara Finch, LPN, 63

When Barbara got excited, she'd scrunch her hands into fists and wave them around like a kid at Christmas. She did it when the Atlanta Braves scored, or while watching her grandkids play baseball, her No. 1 passion outside work. — *Melissa Bailey*



Nina Forbes, LPN, 56

Nina refused to let fear stop her from living. She was terrified of flying. But a few years ago, she got on a plane for the first time to watch her younger daughter, Jennifer, play volleyball. COVID-19 also scared Nina, and as a nurse at an assisted living facility, she knew the virus posed a serious risk. Still, she continued showing up to work. — *Carmen Heredia Rodriguez*



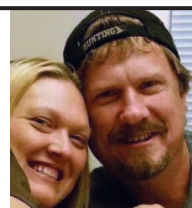
Helen Gbodi, RN, 54

Helen was known for helping elderly neighbors and fellow churchgoers—picking up their medications and groceries and accompanying them on walks. She even dispatched her daughter, Rebecca Gbodi, to shovel snow in neighbors' driveways. "Even when she didn't have a lot, she would always give," Rebecca said. — *Anna Jean Kaiser*



Denny Gilliam, RN, 53

Denny treasured family time, said his wife, Amanda Marr Gilliam, like movie nights, when the kids would pile into the couple's king-size bed with chips and French onion dip. He was a committed nurse—it was his second career, after serving in the military. — *Eli Caban*



Kevin Graiani, NP, 56

Known for his dry sense of humor, Kevin often rattled off quotes from movies. He played bagpipes for the Rockland County Police Emerald Society. When he retired from police work, he began nursing school and became a nurse practitioner in 2018. — *Melissa Bailey*



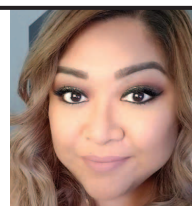
Ali Dennis Guillermo, RN, 44

In 2004, Ali, his wife, Romielyn, and their daughter came to New York from the Philippines to find a better life. Everything fell into place. The former nursing instructor landed a job at Long Island Community Hospital, often working in intensive care or the emergency department. — *Michelle Andrews*



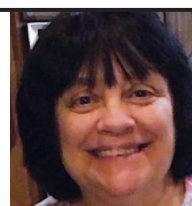
Krist Angielen Castro Guzman, LPN, 35

Krist packed a lot into her short life. She worked full-time while studying to become an RN. She had three children, one a newborn. Smart, funny, and outgoing, she nurtured relationships. — *Mary Chris Jaklevic*



Rose Harrison, RN, 60

"Her personality was so funny, you automatically loved her," Rose's daughter, Amanda Williams, said. "She was so outspoken. If she didn't agree with you, she'd tell you in a respectful way." — *Christina Jewett*



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James House, RN, 40

James had a voracious appetite for learning about and a fascination with the human body. Catrisha House-Phelps said her brother adored his five children, treasured his anatomy and physiology books, and got a kick out of the residents he cared for at Omni Continuing Care. — *Danielle Renwick*



Marilyn Howard, RN, 53

Marilyn was known for her generosity and never missing a party. Born in Guyana, she came to the United States as a teenager. She helped raise her five brothers. — *Noa Yachot*



Aleyamma John, RN, 65

Ginu John said his mother, a devout Christian, found joy in tending to her vegetable garden and doting on her two grandchildren. Aleyamma cooked dishes from her native India and filled the Long Island home she shared with Johnny [her husband], Ginu, and Ginu's family with flowers. — *Danielle Renwick*



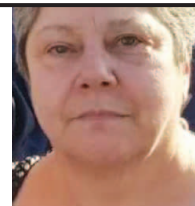
Celia Lardizabal Marcos, RN, 61

Whenever Celia traveled to her hometown of Tagudin in the Philippines, she showered family with gifts and delighted in planning weekend outings for everyone, said her eldest son, Donald. Celia immigrated to the United States in 2001. Three years later, she became a telemetry charge nurse. — *Christina M. Oriel*



Theresa Lococo, RN, 68

Theresa spent most of her life at the hospital, working as a pediatric nurse for almost 48 years. She loved cooking and watching cooking shows, reading, and following soap operas. — *Shefali Luthra*



Maria Lopez, RN, 63

Maria was an expert in robotic surgery and trained others to use the equipment. She taught her two daughters to be independent. The oldest of nine kids, Maria fought her father's expectation that she forgo college, said her daughter Maria, who was named for her. — *Mary Chris Jaklevic*



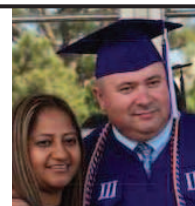
Felicisimo "Tom" Luna, RN, 62

Tom was a joker, a lively and outgoing man who thrived on the fast-paced and varied action of the emergency department. He also adored his three daughters, something clear to all who knew him. — *Christina Jewett*



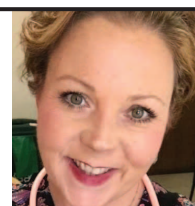
Michael Marceaux, RN, 49

"Everyone who worked with him said he was so happy," said Drake Marceaux, one of Michael's four sons. "He was willing to go above and beyond for patients." — *Victoria Knight*



Kelly Mazzarella, RN, 43

Karen Jedlicka was blown away by the care her big sister Kelly showed every patient. "People would be going through the worst things in their lives and she was just there for them," Karen said. "She just had such a love and a light that emanated from her." — *Suzannab Cavanaugh*



Hazel Mijares, LPN, 66

Faith was central to Hazel's life. She was a lay leader at Trinity United Methodist Church in Jersey City, New Jersey. After a long career, Hazel was finally ready to retire in late March; she died March 30. — *Maureen O'Hagan*



Sheena Miles, RN, 60

Sheena was semi-retired. She usually worked every other weekend, but as COVID-19 emerged in Mississippi, she worked four weekends in a row from mid-March to mid-April. "I've got a duty," she told her son, Tom Miles. — *Michaela Gibson Morris*



Anjanette Miller, RN, 38

As a child, Anjanette dreamed of becoming a nurse in the United States. She studied in her native Philippines and worked briefly in Saudi Arabia before fulfilling her wish in 2001. Miller had hoped to retire to the Philippines and pursue her other passion, filmmaking. — *Danielle Renwick*



Edwin Montanano, RN, 73

Edwin went to the U.S. Open every year. He loved Broadway shows, especially *Miss Saigon*, but also *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Cats*. He liked candy—Symphony bars and M&M's. And he and his wife, Annabella, relished hosting guests. — *Danielle Renwick*



Marybeth Papetti, RN, 65

Marybeth cared for beautiful things. She planted a garden filled with "a thousand different colors" of flowers, according to her son, Scott Papetti. — *Lila Hassan*



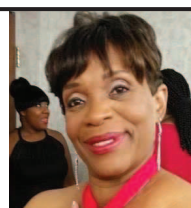
David Joel Perea, RN, 35

David would call in from Maine, Vermont, Minnesota and, ultimately, Nevada, with the same request: "Mom, can you send tamales?" Dominga Perea would ship them overnight. This is how she always knew where her son was. A traveling nurse routinely pulling 80-hour weeks, David "had a tremendous work ethic," said his brother, Daniel. — *Eli Caban*



Tina Reeves, LPN, 58

When Tina visited her grandchildren, music would blast from the car. Wale's "On Chill" rang out: "Tryna hear all your problems, so I can lighten the load." "She loved her music," said daughter Tiana Mohabir. — *Eli Caban*

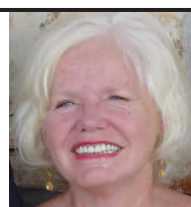


Neftali "Neff" Rios, RN, 37

Hospital colleagues loved working with Neff. He was humble, kind, and capable, a "gentle soul" who always strived to learn something new. — *Maureen O'Hagan*

Rosemary Sell, NP, 80

In the 1960s, Rosemary traveled to Berlin, where she worked as a nurse for the British army and met her future husband, Peter. A life-long love of travel was born. Gregarious and high energy by nature, she loved meeting new people. Before Rosemary died, she had been hatching her next adventure with a friend: to travel to India. — *Noa Yachot*



Rose Taldon, RN, 63

Rose was respected as a strong Black woman, earning a nursing degree while working in public transit for 23 years. Described as stern, she still was quick to tickle her eight grandkids. — *Melissa Bailey*



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[She] was adored by those she “saw as people more than just patients.”

Vianna Thompson, RN, 52

Vianna spent two night shifts caring for a fellow Veterans Affairs healthcare worker who was dying from COVID-19. Two weeks later, she too was lying in a hospital intensive care unit, with a coworker holding her hand as she died. Vianna had dreamed of teaching nursing one day.

— *Melissa Bailey*



Celia Yap-Banago, RN, 69

Celia was a 5-foot-tall “fireball,” said one coworker. “She was very outspoken,” said Charlene Carter, a fellow nurse. “But I later learned that’s a really good quality to have, as a nurse, so you can advocate for your patients and advocate for yourself.” — *Alex Smith*



Shenetta White-Ballard, LPN, 44

As a nurse to psychiatric patients, Shenetta was adored by those she “saw as people more than just patients,” said her husband, Eddie Ballard. She knew their parents’ names, their hometowns, and hobbies. — *Eli Caban*



Access a list of nurses who have died from COVID-19 at the American Nurses Association’s Nightingale Tribute webpage (nursing-world.org/ana/about-ana/nightingale-tribute/). Another list of healthcare worker COVID-19 deaths is at medscape.com/viewarticle/927976#vp_1.

*KHN is a nonprofit news service covering health issues. It is an editorially independent program of KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), which is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente.

What healthcare personnel should know about caring for patients with confirmed or possible coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Healthcare personnel (HCP) are on the front lines of caring for patients with confirmed or possible infection with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and therefore have an increased risk of exposure to this virus. HCPs can minimize their risk of exposure when caring for confirmed or possible COVID-19 patients by following [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed \(COVID-19\) or Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings](#).

How You Can Protect Yourself

Healthcare personnel caring for patients with confirmed or possible COVID-19 should adhere to CDC recommendations for [infection prevention and control](#) (IPC):

- Assess and triage these patients with acute respiratory symptoms and risk factors for COVID-19 to minimize chances of exposure, including placing a facemask on the patient and placing them in an examination room with the door closed in an Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR), if available.
- Use [Standard Precautions](#), [Contact Precautions](#), and [Airborne Precautions](#) and eye protection when caring for patients with confirmed or possible COVID-19.

- Perform hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub before and after all patient contact, contact with potentially infectious material, and before putting on and upon removal of PPE, including gloves. Use soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.
- Practice how to properly [don, use, and doff PPE](#) in a manner to prevent self-contamination.
- Perform aerosol-generating procedures, in an AIIR, while following appropriate IPC practices, including use of appropriate PPE.

For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19