

Nurses Who Inspire

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For Joshua Landry, MSN, RN, NCSN, nursing has never been simply a career; it is an identity.

“Nursing became who I was, not necessarily a job,” he reflects. “I’ve become a nurse. I am a nurse. It’s not something that I do, it’s who I am.” Born in Aurora, Illinois, and raised in an Air Force family, Joshua moved frequently throughout his childhood. Yet one thing remained consistent, even in middle school; he knew he wanted to work in healthcare. He was drawn to caring for people and to serving others in meaningful ways.

After high school, he became an EMT-Basic and later an EMT-Intermediate, practicing for five and a half years while completing his nursing prerequisites. The journey took three to four years of coursework, balanced with long shifts and family responsibilities. During that time, he briefly considered teaching. But when student teaching approached, he realized it was not the right path, though he continues to deeply respect educators, including his wife.

Nursing, he realized, allowed him to meet people at critical moments and address their most fundamental needs. Grounded in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Joshua believes that children cannot thrive academically or emotionally

unless their basic physical and psychological needs are met first.

While completing his associate degree in nursing at New Mexico State University in Alamogordo, entering the program alongside his mother, Joshua completed a school nursing rotation at Tularosa Public Schools and within the Mescalero Apache community. That experience became a defining turning point.

“Oftentimes, the school nurse is seen as that safe space,” he explains. “The first one to see concern.”

Working directly with youth and educating them about their health solidified his direction. He discovered not only a love for caring for students but a passion for teaching them, helping them gain confidence, awareness, and the tools to navigate challenges during formative years.

After earning his associate degree, Joshua reached out to Alamogordo Public Schools about a permanent position in school nursing. He was told he would need a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Rather than viewing this as a setback, he saw it as the next step in reaching his goal.

While raising children and prioritizing family, he worked wherever he could to support his education. He gained valuable clinical experience working in skilled care for two and a half years while also serving as a substitute RN for Alamogordo Public Schools and the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

He returned to New Mexico State University, completed his BSN in one year, and graduated in 2011. By March 2012, he accepted a permanent nursing role with Alamogordo Public Schools. It was there, working closely with middle school students, that nursing became

something deeper than employment; it became part of who he was.

When asked what brings him the most joy, his answer was clear.

“The reward is being part of kids’ journeys, giving them the tools to be the best they can.”

The philosophy of equipping others has become a defining theme of his leadership. A mechanic friend once told him, “Josh, you can do anything in life if you have the right tool.” That message stayed with him. As he says, “nurses help people get the tools they need... to achieve their greatest self.”

As his commitment to students deepened, so did his desire to strengthen the profession that supports them. Joshua became involved with the New Mexico School Nurses Association (NMSNA). A mentor recognized his leadership potential and encouraged him to get involved, opening the door to advocacy work beyond his school building.

From 2019 to 2024, Joshua served as the Director for New Mexico with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN). Through that role, he learned how to advocate at the governmental level, build relationships with policymakers, and represent school nurses in statewide and national discussions. He participated in the Capitol Challenge in Washington, D.C., meeting directly with lawmakers to advance student health priorities.

Within NMSNA, Joshua has served as Data Coordinator from 2017 through 2019 and continues to serve as Legislative Chair. As Data Coordinator, he supported development of the annual School Health Report, overseeing the collection of 40–50 data points per student visit and translating that information into meaningful advocacy. Through this

work, he has also served as a CDC Data Champion, helping elevate school nurse data in public health conversations. As Legislative Chair, Joshua approached his work with both conviction and careful strategy. While many focused on placing a nurse in every building, he stepped back and asked a foundational question: before expanding positions, what would it cost? He also thought, "We have to bring things back to basics, build from the ground level up."

In discussions with fellow NMSNA board members, he identified significant variability in how school nurse pay was structured across districts. Some mirrored teacher pay scales; others did not. Compensation inconsistencies created barriers to recruitment and retention.

After approaching the association lobbyist about aligning school nurse compensation more closely with teacher pay structures, he was asked how many nurses were currently on a formal pay scale. He did not have that answer, so he created a statewide survey and distributed it through the NMSNA listserv, gathering data on tier systems, alignment with teacher pay, and whether national certification qualified nurses to advance levels.

The survey findings confirmed wide disparities across the state. For Joshua, the conclusion was clear: stabilizing and regulating pay must come first to attract and retain nurses before expanding staffing statewide.

Joshua's approach of asking foundational questions, gathering evidence, and building from the ground up reflects his growth as a leader. Through mentorship, Joshua has refined his leadership philosophy. He once asked his friend, New Mexico Senator Wyatt Atkins, how he had achieved so much success. The response was simple: "I was in the right place at the right time." Joshua carries that perspective with humility. He shares that he tries to follow his intuition and his faith, go where he feels led, and "keep myself out

of the way."

In his view, leadership is rooted in community. He believes deeply that we cannot do anything alone, that we are stronger together. He relies on his team, embraces the help around him, and intentionally draws inspiration from the people he works alongside. His mindset is simple: anything is possible.

Today, Joshua serves as the Resource Nurse within Alamogordo Public Schools. While his role has evolved, his purpose has not. Where he once equipped students directly, he now equips nurses, giving them the tools to support children across the district, even if he is not the one providing direct care.

He continues to serve as Legislative Chair for NMSNA and was recently asked to run for President of NASN. Looking ahead, he hopes to bring more positive change not only in New Mexico but also at the federal level, strengthening school nursing, supporting nurse leaders, and ensuring that students everywhere have access to care.

Despite national opportunities, Joshua remains deeply rooted in New Mexico. He loves the mountains, the culture, the people, and the beauty of the state. It feels like a small community.

"This is our home base."

Joshua Landry's story is a powerful reminder that nursing leadership does not begin inside boardrooms. It begins with compassion, humility, courage, and a commitment to ensuring others have the tools they need to thrive. Through service, data-driven advocacy, and steady dedication, his journey demonstrates the profound impact one dedicated nurse can have on an entire system. Relaying stories like his strengthens the voice of nursing and affirms the difference purposeful leadership can make. ■

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