

FROM TRANSPORTER TO NURSING LEADER: HOW ONE TEAM MEMBER IS TAKING “CHARGE”

Brian Kilgo didn't set out to be a nursing leader with CHI Memorial. In fact, health care wasn't the path he initially pursued. However, he's grown to have a passion for the health care field, quickly working his way up to a nursing leader for the organization.

Kilgo started his career path with the Georgia Department of Corrections after graduating high school, with a dream of eventually going into law enforcement. After being there for nearly eight years, he was ready for a change. While he says it was a good career to pursue, he knew it wasn't the job he wanted long-term and left to start his own lawn care company and return to school.

“My mother was an LPN for more than 20 years, so I grew up around nursing homes and different care facilities and always had a special place for caring for people and trying to make their lives better, especially in times of need,” Kilgo says.

“I always saw her go above and beyond for the patients she cared for in the nursing home and thought how great it was that someone could care so much. As I got older and into it, I realized how it can grow on you.”

Kilgo says his mother's career shaped his interest in health care, and when he started exploring his next career path, nursing immediately stood out to him. He took a job at a local facility as a transporter to get his foot in the door but says once he heard about the culture at CHI Memorial, he knew it was time to make another switch.

“I was hired as a transporter for radiology and loved it,” Kilgo says. “I started working weekends and had nursing school, and I ended up still having the lawn care business on the side. I worked weekends for about eight months while in transport, and then I transitioned to the emergency department as a nurse tech for several years until I finished nursing school.”

As a transporter, Kilgo played a vital role in moving patients to procedures and back to their rooms, but he knew he wanted more involvement in the patients' overall care.

“I would hear codes called out overhead and go to those rooms and stand outside and watch and wonder what it was like to be able to help the patient,” Kilgo says. “That motivated me to complete school and push on, working every weekend as a transporter and emergency department technician while I worked my way up.”

Kilgo transitioned to a charge nurse and also worked as a float pool nurse at all three CHI Memorial hospital campuses. Deciding to explore another type of nursing, Kilgo took a job with a local hospice company. During this time, he realized that CHI Memorial was where he wanted to be.

“I did learn a tremendous amount in hospice and gained a lot of knowledge but quickly realized I didn't want to lose my skills in nursing. While I was developing a new set of skills, I was also losing a lot of emergent skills on the clinical side that I didn't want to lose,” Kilgo says. “CHI Memorial then welcomed me back, and I came back with a different attitude,

knowing that the grass isn't always greener on the other side. I saw that this company values its employees, and it was a humbling experience to go outside and see a different type of work as a nurse and come back and see how good we have it here."

From his time in hospice care, Kilgo says he was more encouraged than ever to pursue the leadership side of health care. He moved to an emergency department and medical-surgical charge nurse role at Hospital Georgia when the opportunity arose. In this position, he's strengthening his leadership and management skills each day.

"My time with the Department of Corrections and also in hospice really helped me with my interpersonal communication skills and how to talk to people," says Kilgo. "Especially with hospice care, you have to learn how to use your words to best suit that situation. In hospice, I saw that when a patient passes away, the family becomes the priority, and you can sometimes forget that in the hospital setting. The family is also as much of a part of your care and care plan as the patient, and often we tend to forget that."

Kilgo received his associate's degree in nursing from Chattanooga State Community College. As soon as he finishes his bachelor's degree, he will start a master's degree in health care leadership. He thanks his wife, three kids, and colleagues for the support they've given along the way to help land him in his current role.

"I HAVE FOUND MY CALLING. I WILL RETIRE DOING THIS."



**BRIAN
KILGO, RN**

8 YEARS

**CHARGE
NURSE**

**HOSPITAL
GEORGIA**