

From volunteer to PA: Nicole's 20-year journey at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital

AHN St. Vincent Hospital is celebrating 150 years – and Nicole has been there for 20 of them.

Her history is deeply intertwined with the hospital's, where she started as a junior volunteer who clocked more than 500 hours. She's now a physician's assistant.

"I would make up beds. I would help clean the beds," she said. "I would stock drawers in each of the units. If someone needed a blanket I would get it. Basically anything the nurses needed an extra hand with, I would do."

"When I first started as a junior volunteer, my main duty was helping the nurses ensure patients were comfortable," said Nicole. "I would make and clean patient's beds, stock drawers, and get needed items for patients. I was happy to be an extra set of hands."

When she turned 16, Nicole got her first official job delivering food trays to patients.

"I felt like a true adult when I got my first "real" job at St. Vincent," Nicole said. "My coworkers were a bunch of kids my age from different schools. It was just a fun environment. Everyone worked so well together, and it was a very good first working experience. And I still got to talk to patients."

After she graduated from high school, Nicole continued working at AHN St. Vincent. From the gift shop to supporting nurses by sitting with patients to working in registration during college, each experience offered a unique perspective.

After becoming a physician's assistant, Nicole took her first PA job in Cleveland, but the pull of Saint Vincent was strong. When her husband was recruited back to Erie, she was excited to return to home.

"I knew I only wanted to work at St. Vincent," she said.

Nicole joined the Allied Urology department.

"It was so nice to come home and have the familiarity of the providers, the patients, the facilities, and the services that we have. This is what I am most proud of Saint Vincent for: creating this comfortable and homey environment you won't find anywhere else."

Fast forward to today, and Nicole continues in her role as a PA and within the last two years became an advanced practice provider supervisor.

She's come a long way at Saint Vincent Hospital, but still appreciates where she started.

"Every time I walk into the hospital, I walk past registration. It reminds me of why I'm doing this, and where I came from." Nicole said. "It reminds me to appreciate every position because I know what an integral part everyone in the health care system plays in every patient experience. It takes everyone here to keep the hospital running."

As Saint Vincent celebrates its 150th anniversary, Nicole feels a profound sense of pride.

"It's a huge sense of accomplishment. We're still a well-known hospital that's continuing to advance and grow. We're still recognized as one of the best hospitals in the region," Nicole said.

“I’m proud to know I was part of that and continue to be a part of that, and I hope to draw other people into it as well.”

Nicole's story is more than just a personal triumph; it's a powerful testament to the enduring spirit of Saint Vincent Hospital. Her journey reflects the hospital's own evolution – from a provider of vital community service to a medical powerhouse.