

# Health profession logical career choice for school nurse

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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Becoming a nurse seemed like the logical thing for Johanna Mason to do, though it didn't hurt that it was what her father said she was going to do.

As a teenager, said Mrs. Mason, she was a "candy striper" at the the hospital in Norton, where she grew up. Later, she took the certified nurse aide course and worked as an aide while still in high school.

Mrs. Mason said when she graduated from high school, nursing school seemed like the thing to do, so she left for Salina to attend Asbury School of Nursing.

Over the last 24 years, she said, she has worked at a hospital, as a college health nurse, a home health nurse and with a hospice.

When Mrs. Mason and her husband Doug moved to Oberlin in 2005 to run Teens for Christ, the school nurse position was open for the Oberlin School District. Mr. Mason also is the pastor at the Lund Covenant Church.

Mrs. Mason said she applied for the job and started to work for the schools in August 2005.

She serves as the nurse at both Oberlin Elementary School and Decatur Community High. The job is only part time, she said, putting her in each school for about four to five hours a day.

Mrs. Mason said this is her first time as a school nurse. She said she has really liked the setting and it's been interesting getting to interact with the kids. The students, she said, really make the job fun.

Since she hadn't been a nurse in a school before, Mrs. Mason had to go learn to do vision and hearing screening so she could do those for the district.

The job, she said, also means looking over immunization records and keeping track to see if each student has everything they need to be in school. She said she also keeps an eye on the general health of the students.

At the grade school, said Mrs. Mason, she looks for any possible problems that could come up because of health-related issues. The younger kids haven't been in a learning situation like this before, she noted.

She said she also teaches healthy habits. At the grade school, they have started having well-

ness days again. In January, the students learned about taking care of their eyes and then in February about how to care for their teeth.

Before the year ends, she said, she wants to discuss alcohol and exercise with the classes.

The Masons have three daughters, with the oldest following in her mom's footsteps. Rebecca, 21, is in nursing school at Colby Community College. Amber is a senior in Oberlin and Bethany is a kindergartner.

For anyone thinking about going into nursing, said Mrs. Mason, it is a good idea in high school to work in a hospital or nursing home. That way, she said, you can get a feel for the work and for caring for people. It's important to get some practical experience, she said, so a student can decide if nursing is for them. Mrs. Mason suggested looking for a nursing program with lots of clinical time. Also, she said, it is a good idea to look into jobs that will help pay for the schooling.

She said her daughter has found a hospital that will help pay for her training. In trade, she will agree to work for them for so many years. If she chooses to leave, she said, lots of times a new

hospital will pay the debt to the first one.

There are more areas for a nurse to work in now, said Mrs. Mason, compared to when she started. Nurses and people wanting to study in the health field can do lots of different things.

Mrs. Mason said she has been fortunate to work part time. That gives you the best of both worlds, she said. Not only is she able to be a nurse, but she is also able to be a mom, a pastor's wife, help with Teens for Christ and with other things in the community.

It's important, she said, to do something in a field where you will have time to be with the kids.

With shift work, she said, for instance when she worked as a nurse at a hospital, she would work from 3 to 10 p.m. at times. That way, said Mrs. Mason, she could be home during the day with the kids and her husband would be home at night.

Part of the secret, she said, to balancing home, family, job and all, is figuring out that the kids didn't have to be involved in every single activity that comes along. That freed up some time for her, said Mrs. Mason.



Front row: Jessica Bremer, Tami Shaw and Beth Harmon. Back row: Alyssa Rippe, Iris Mastin, Janice Ganje and Valisha Raile.

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## Welcome

Businesses all over Decatur County have women working in jobs that range from answering the phone to running the show.

The staff at *The Oberlin Herald* wanted to highlight some of the working women in the county.

On the cover of the edition is one of these women — Johanna, nurse in the Oberlin School District, checked the ears of a youngster at Oberlin Elementary School.

Work on the Working Women's 2008 section was done by Dave Bergling, advertising; Karla Jones, makeup; Mary Lou Olson, proofing and writing; and Kimberly Davis, editing and writing.



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