

Forensic Nursing - Excellence



Stephanie Wahlgren

LOCATION: Sedro-Woolley, Washington State, USA

WORK SETTING: Hospital, Community, Community College

NURSING ROLE:

- ED RN and SANE-A at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center in Bellingham, WA
- ED RN and SANE-A at Skagit Valley Hospital in Mt. Vernon, WA, also de facto director of the Forensic Nurses at this hospital
- Clinical Instructor for the ADN Nursing Program at Skagit Valley College, Mt. Vernon, WA
- Voluntary community outreach re: Forensic nursing in both Whatcom and Skagit County, WA

Stephanie Wahlgren lives, embodies, and represents the very best of Forensic Nursing in Washington State.

Stephanie has almost single-handedly grown the Forensic Nursing team at Skagit Valley Hospital from a few reluctant, undertrained, and underpaid nurses, to a strong team of well-trained, confident, and appropriately compensated forensic experts. Through her tireless advocacy and passion for this work and this incredibly high-need/high-risk population, she has inspired many nurses – myself included – to follow her into this deeply rewarding specialty.

Not only has she precepted and mentored her co-workers, she also wrote and submitted a new clause to the WSNA (Washington State Nurses Association) union contract to ensure that Forensic Nurses were paid above and beyond their base hospital wages for the time and energy they willingly gave to assist victims of sexual assault, often outside of scheduled hours. The new clause validating the importance of these nurses through compensation was approved by the union, and signed by the hospital administration.

Stephanie is not only a committed ED charge nurse and forensic nurse - one of only two SANE-A certified nurses at St. Joseph's Medical Center – but she also teaches ADN nursing students at Skagit Valley College. She also volunteers her time to high school and universities in the two counties where she works, teaching students about consent, body safety, the definition of sexual assault, and what forensic nurses do.

And as if this wasn't enough, she is a wife, a mother to three, and currently pursuing her DNP at Gonzaga University. She is also one of the kindest and most generous humans I have ever been fortunate enough to call my friend. Stephanie has inspired me to pursue my certification and higher education in Forensic Nursing. She is an asset to her community, her state, and Forensic Nursing itself.

