



## ROSE AWARD: RECOGNIZING SERVICE EXCELLENCE OF THE PATIENT CARE TECHNICIAN

*Led by the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, Pathways to Work is a cross-functional collaboration of funders, employers and training providers working to create innovative solutions for moving entry-level workers into good middle-skill jobs, and ensure employers have a pipeline of skilled and ready-to-work employees. Pathways to Work is a local partner of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and a member of its network of more than 30 regional collaboratives. The Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation is a critical partner of Pathways to Work and played a key role in implementing and supporting the activities outlined in this case study.*

### BACKGROUND

In 2017, a number of hospitals and healthcare systems in Dallas were experiencing difficulty recruiting and high turnover in their patient care technician (PCT)/patient care associate (PCA) positions. The Pathways to Work initiative, housed at the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, worked

### BETTER SKILLS, BETTER JOBS

Quality jobs support individuals and families, provide a good quality of life, and build thriving communities. A good job is also a competitive advantage. With support from the Prudential Foundation, National Fund for Workforce Solutions' regional collaboratives are working with local businesses to test strategies to design better jobs to help recruit, retain, and advance their workforce.

### JOB DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Good jobs are about more than just wages. The National Fund's [Job Design Framework](#) offers a menu of elements that can comprise a quality job, including benefits, training, recognition and advancement. The framework supports businesses in consulting with frontline workers to choose the combination of options that best fit the needs of their business and their employees. In a tight labor market, the better the job, the more likely an employer will attract and retain the best workers.

This is one in a series of three case studies that profiles Dallas-area health systems and their investments in frontline worker job quality.

with the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation to convene several meetings with the major healthcare institutions in the region to address these twin issues. Over the course of these meetings, three health systems—Parkland Hospital and Health System, Methodist Health System, and UT Southwestern Medical Center—agreed to allow Pathways to Work to conduct focus group with current PCTs and PCAs in the fall of 2017.

These focus groups revealed two key themes across all three health systems:

1

PCTs and PCAs are passionate and motivated to care for patients. They see themselves as a critical part of the care team, as they are often the staff members that spend the most time at the bedside, caring for patients, and they often function as the eyes and ears on the floor.

2

PCTs and PCAs want to feel like they are appreciated and that their contributions are seen and valued, especially by nurses and other members of the care team. While PCTs raised suggestions such as increased pay, increased access to training, and help identifying career advancement pathways, the single most common thing PCTs mentioned wanting more of was simply genuine appreciation for their work.

3

Specifically related to recognition, PCTs and PCAs told interviewers that not feeling appreciated was a major point of dissatisfaction with their jobs, and that recognition would help them feel respected and included as part of the care team. PCTs and PCAs also identified lack of recognition as a contributor to burn out and voluntary turnover.

In response to these findings, Parkland, Methodist and UT Southwestern agreed that improved PCT/PCA recognition should be a key component of Pathways to Work's application to the National Fund for Workforce Solutions' Better Skills,

Better Jobs initiative. This case study focuses on the development and implementation of these efforts, with a particular focus on the ROSE (Recognition of Service Excellence) at Parkland Hospital. Through this case study, we hope to inspire and inform future efforts to recognize PCTs, PCAs and other frontline healthcare workers and the vital contributions they make to patient care.

## RESPONSE

Parkland Hospital and Health System (Parkland) employs more than 420 PCAs out of a total of 4,500 employees. Recognized as a CareerSTAT Frontline Healthcare Worker Champion in 2019, Parkland demonstrates a sustained commitment to invest in the skills and careers of its frontline workers.

With increasing turnover of PCAs across the system and concerns voiced at nursing forums related to lack of recognition, Parkland's Chief Nursing Officer, Karen Watts, began an effort to develop a recognition program unique to unlicensed assistive personnel in Nursing support roles. Parkland needed meaningful PCA recognition.

A team of individuals, led by then-director of career development Gerard Camacho and Director of Nursing Administration Sarah Towery, identified the widely-used and recognized DAISY Award for nurses as a starting point for developing the PCA recognition. A team of peers and nurses was formed to flesh out the new recognition program, which became known as the ROSE (Recognition for Service Excellence).

The ROSE Award is a monthly recognition opportunity for in-patient and out-patient PCAs at Parkland. To ensure that recognition was meaningful, the ROSE Award was developed with input from PCAs themselves. Nurse Leaders were asked to select PCA representatives from each nursing division to participate in the recognition program development and implementation. Nominated PCAs were then asked to volunteer to participate. In total, 22 PCAs from across the system joined 11 nurses and nurse managers who were on the well-established DAISY award recognition committee to provide insight into the program design and share their learning experiences.

On January 24, 2018, the workgroup and recognition program development began. PCAs were given the primary voice and decision-making authority with input into every element of the program, from creation of by-laws for the committee, to the program name, to the nomination process, branding, communication and rewards. Working together, the PCAs and nurses decided on several rewards that they felt were truly meaningful and would appeal to a wide range of PCAs.

### ROSE AWARD NOMINATION AND SELECTION

The recognition program development team came up with the following process to nominate and select ROSE Awardees.

1

Both inpatient and outpatient PCAs/ unlicensed assistive personnel in nursing support roles are eligible to be recognized

2

PCAs are nominated each month by Parkland employees, physicians, patients, family/visitors or volunteers

3

Nominations are made through an online portal or via email to a designated email address. The nominations are categorized by the program coordinator and blinded before presenting to the nomination selection committee. The committee selects the winners using a scoring process and consensus decision. The committee makes their final selection but is not aware of the actual PCA winners selected until the PCA winner is revealed at the unit level celebration each month. Anonymity is maintained throughout the process to prevent bias.

4

Nominations that are exceptional as identified by the nomination committee are brought back for re-consideration for up to 3 months. This ensures that great employees have several opportunities for selection.

5

Each unit has patient/family nomination brochures that they accept and submit on behalf of patients/families/visitors. Units can accept both written and verbal nominations.

6

A committee of PCAs/UAPs and nurses reviews the nominations and selects one inpatient and one outpatient PCA each month to receive the Rose Award.

Parkland launched the ROSE Award in June 2018 and recognized its first PCA awardees in July 2018. In the first month, Parkland received over 150 nominations, demonstrating both the pent-up demand for this kind of recognition as well as the willingness of nurses and other staff to support the PCAs on their teams.

### ROSE AWARD RECOGNITION

The program development committee felt strongly that ROSE Award winners should be celebrated at the unit level in order to foster a culture of recognition and include the whole team.

After winners are chosen by the selection committee, the program director works with the nurse manager of the unit to coordinate a time to recognize the awardee. At the appointed time, as many of the selection committee members as possible, together with the Chief Nursing Officer and/or other leadership, surprise the winner on their unit with cookies and a ROSE Award banner. The nurse manager reads the nomination letter and presents the awardee with a certificate signed by the Chief Nursing Officer and Associate Chief Nursing Officer as well as a Rose Award tote bag, Rose badge clip, Rose Award lapel pin, free reserved parking for the month, movie tickets, and an actual rose flower. In addition, ROSE Awardees are featured on Parkland's Nursing Facebook page and on a Wall of Excellence outside the Center for Nursing Excellence.





Alejandra Gonzales  
9 Ortho  
Rose Award Winner - July 2018



#### ALEJANDRA GONZALEZ, PCA II (9 ORTHO) JULY 2018 INPATIENT WINNER

Alejandra Gonzalez has worked at Parkland as a PCA since 2012. She was nominated in June 2018 for showing extraordinary compassion and care toward a patient and her family member who could not stay to receive discharge instructions because they could not afford to park in the garage. Alejandra took the time to listen to the family member and paid for the family member's parking out of her own pocket so they could stay for safe discharge teaching. Her nomination letter noted that she "is one of the first PCAs to come to mind when a new hire is to be trained because she goes above and beyond.... She brings laughter and joy to the unit and encompasses everything that Parkland stands for." In reflecting on her recognition, Alejandra stated, ***"I have been working here at Parkland for about six years...and I would have never thought I would have been recognized on such a level. To have been chosen for the Rose Award and being one of the first to receive this award has been an extreme honor."***



Patricia Branch  
Family Medicine Clinic  
Rose Award Winner - July 2018



#### PATRICIA BRANCH, SR. MEDICAL ASSISTANT (FAMILY MEDICAL CLINIC) JULY 2018 OUTPATIENT WINNER

Patricia Branch has worked at Parkland 16 years. She was nominated in June 2018 for showing initiative and creativity in addressing the needs of patients and staff in Parkland's outpatient clinic. One example noted in her nomination was when Pat noted that providers had a hard time finding their exam rooms (since they rotate among various clinics), Pat took it upon herself to come in each morning and make signs for each door to facilitate examinations and decrease the stress of the providers. Noting the positive feedback from residents, the clinic has since adopted Pat's idea as standard practice. Her nominator stated, ***"She has figured out how to serve patients and remain true to Parkland's CIRCLES, while maintaining friendships with her co-workers, a rare combination and feat."***

## RESULTS AND IMPACT

As of May 2019, Parkland has recognized 22 PCAs—split evenly between inpatient and outpatient staff. PCAs and other frontline healthcare workers (called unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) at Parkland) finally feel that the whole Parkland system, not just individual managers, values their contributions and sees them as critical to daily operations and patient care. Nurse leadership and managers report that they have received incredible feedback and appreciation for this recognition from nursing staff as well as from the PCAs and UAPs themselves. Nurses have voiced appreciation for a way to recognize the contributions of PCAs on their teams. The selection committee has also received nominations from physicians as well as family members, and the letters they receive highlight the commitment that numerous PCAs have for their patients and the dignified manner and work ethic that they bring with them every day.

While it is too early to tell if ROSE Award recognition is having a long-term impact on PCA retention and turnover, feedback from PCAs, nurses and managers indicate that it is having an impact on employee engagement and morale.

Beyond Parkland, both UT Southwestern and Methodist are at different points in the journey to bring the ROSE Award to their own institutions, adapting it as necessary to fit their organizational culture and operations. UTSW has adopted many of the elements of the ROSE Award, including the name, badge pin, public recognition, utilization of a nomination process and selection committee, and inclusion of entire units or departments in the celebration. UTSW has also changed processes such as using a quarterly selection process and leveraging its PCT advisory council and website as part of the outreach and selection process. Methodist is still exploring whether it will adopt the ROSE Award, but in the meantime, it has integrated some similar elements into PCT Week recognition activities, including unit celebrations, treats and recognition of excellence.

Pathways to Work and the DFWHC Education Foundation have been able to use their convening power to share the ROSE Award program with other hospitals and health systems in Dallas-Fort Worth as well. A number of hospitals

are now exploring whether the ROSE Award would make sense to adopt and roll out regionally as a recognition for excellence among PCTs/PCAs and other unlicensed assistive personnel, with the hope that one day it might gain the traction that DAISY Award has gained in the nursing profession.

## LESSONS AND OBSERVATIONS

### *Include PCTs and PCAs in the design process*

Parkland found that including PCTs and PCAs in the design process was critical to developing a meaningful recognition process and program. Their engagement not only helped Parkland choose appropriate awards, but also helped them generate excitement and buy-in about the program across the institution.

### *Both grant funding & institutional support play important roles.*

Grant funding from the National Fund and Pathways to Work was critical in getting the recognition program at Parkland off the ground. Parkland, Methodist and UTSW all reported that the impetus and requirements of external funding pushed them to take on initiatives that they knew needed to be done but lacked the “activation energy” or dedicated funding to tackle before. An external funding source with accountability requirements provided the attention needed to get the recognition program started and to make initial investments in pieces like the recognition wall and the purchase of badges and pins. Parkland also designed its program for the long-term, choosing awards that were meaningful but relatively low-cost and that were sustainable over time.

### *Build a big tent.*

In designing the recognition program, Parkland went beyond recognizing the individual to including the department in the celebration. This approach has helped build buy-in, support and excitement about the recognition process. The departments voluntarily engaged in the celebration of the ROSE award recipient and have found unique ways to celebrate award recipients above and beyond the standard recognition and rewards of the program. The team engagement and excitement has added to the recognition of the PCA.

*Recognition programs are important but not sufficient.*

PCTs brought up many issues during the focus group related to feeling appreciated and acknowledged, only some of which can be addressed through recognition programs such as the ROSE Award. To build a truly inclusive and engaging environment for all employees, healthcare employers need to examine and address issues of organizational culture, dynamics among care team members, supervisor/manager training and employee engagement in addition to building effective recognition programs.

*Leadership and staffing are critical at all stages.*

Strong programmatic leadership has been key in getting the ROSE Award off the ground. Without support of managers and leaders and resource allocation to drive progress, the recognition program would not have made it to implementation. As important, once the program got off the ground, Parkland invested in the program by making sure the budget was approved, program coordinator was identified and staff attendance was encouraged to ensure engagement and sustainability. Parkland estimates that it takes roughly 15 hours of administrative staffing per month to run the program, and as of the publication of this case study, Parkland has committed to supporting that level of staffing.

Grant support encouraged the organization to develop and implement the program, particularly given that the largest costs were upfront in building the program's infrastructure. Once managers and leadership started to see that the program was paying dividends in terms of employee engagement, morale and retention over the short-term, the budgetary support to maintain the program was approved. Finally, to sustain the program long-term, maintaining executive leadership support through sharing data about the need and impact of the ROSE Award will be critical to secure ongoing budgetary support.

#### **NATIONAL FUND & CAREERSTAT**

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions invests in a dynamic national network of 30+ communities taking a demand-driven, evidence-based approach to workforce development. At the local level, the National Fund's partner organizations contribute resources, test ideas, collect data, and improve public policies and business practices that help all workers succeed and employers have the talent they need to compete. [CareerSTAT](#), an initiative of the National Fund, is a network of over 300 healthcare professionals who are committed to advancing healthcare's frontline workers. Learn more at [www.NationalFund.org](http://www.NationalFund.org).

