

## **The Life and Legacy of Patricia Edwards**

Greenville resident, Patricia “Pat” Edwards, cared for the sickest patients in the hospital during her entire 3<sup>rd</sup> shift career. Edwards worked as a monitor tech, unit secretary, and registered nurse at Greenville Hospital System for 25 years, traveled as a nurse for two years, and spent the last fourteen years as a nurse at Bon Secours St. Francis - Greenville.

Edwards was born in Chicago, Illinois, and her family moved to Greenville in the 1970s. After graduating from Carolina High School, she attended Greenville Technical College, while she worked at Greenville Hospital System. Her daughters recall her working the 3<sup>rd</sup> shift, arriving home, taking them to school, and then going to school herself, before she received her nursing degree in the early 1990s.

Being a divorced, single mother, her children always wondered how she had the energy to take on 16-hour days at a time and still have the compassion and energy to be the selfless nurse she was to others who were in need of care at their most vulnerable times. Edwards treated others like they were an immediate family member, regardless of their circumstances, past, or history. She made sure each of her patients were properly bathed, his or her family was properly informed, and most of all each patient was comfortable in his/her most difficult time of sickness.

When she entered the doors of the intensive care unit at St. Francis Hospital in downtown Greenville, her coworkers nicknamed Nurse Pat “Bubbles”, because she lovingly provided her patients with bubble baths in their beds at the beginning of her shift. Deborah McDonald, her loving best friend for decades, and who worked together with her on the same shift for the past eight years, recalls the joys of working with her friend, and how difficult it has been returning to work with Edwards not being there beside her.

No one knew Edwards would have died suddenly from a virus that has killed so many since March of this year. Edwards entire household was affected by the coronavirus – her mother, her daughter, and her grandson. Her mother, Rosa Lee Finch Hellams, 96, died a week later following her death in a different hospital due to the coronavirus.

The family has been supported throughout this process in many ways. Edwards meant a lot to her surrounding community. When their mother was in the intensive care unit, her children can recall the support from the staff at St. Francis and GHS surrounding their mother’s room with prayers, love, and most of all hope. Hope that if anyone could pull through this virus, it would be their beloved mother and coworker Pat.

Outside of the hospital walls, she was another special kind of woman. She loved to cook, work in her yard, and watch football. She learned all her characteristics from her father, James B. Hellams, Sr. He taught her at a very young age the importance of working hard, how to cook, and how to care of others, even when they are not family.

Edwards opened her home to many for home cooked meals on holidays, special occasions and any given Sunday she prepared a meal. She also opened her home to several people. Although not her biological children, she took her two step-children in as her own after she divorced at a young age. She never treated them any different from her biological children. She was the best mother and Nana to four girls, 1 son, 13 grandchildren, and 3 godchildren.

The impact Edwards has left on her family, friends, surrounding community, and the nursing profession inspired her family to established a scholarship fund to honor the life and legacy of Patricia Edwards.

### **Nurse Pat's Legacy Continues**

Patricia "Nurse Pat" Edwards Nursing Scholarship is a nonprofit organization established upon the passing of Patricia Edwards. She died August 19, 2020, from COVID-19, and was an ICU Registered Nurse in Greenville, South Carolina since the early 1990s. Since March of this year, she fearlessly took on extra hours, due to lack of staffing, to care for COVID patients in ICU.

This scholarship foundation identifies the nursing profession as an agent of change for individuals, families, and communities. Nurses impact people in countless ways and in many environments. The very things that make you who you are tend to be the very things that attract you to the nursing profession. Nurse Pat embraced the nursing profession as a part of her very soul, and loved her patients as if they were her own family. She was honest, caring, and an advocate for her patients.

It is our goal to create a new generation of nurses. Being a nurse says something about who you are as a person. As a nurse, one should embrace compassion, selflessness, strength, integrity, and patient advocacy. We will seek to provide nursing scholarships to those who resemble these characteristics in their personal life as well as their professional. The scholarships will provide access to postsecondary juniors and seniors seeking a nursing degree. We are still working out the particulars on the scholarship criteria.

We have created a website, which is, <https://www.nursepatscholarship.org/>. We have received and continue to receive an outpour of donations from many who our mother knew, took care of, and believes in supporting her legacy. She was an amazing mother, nana, sister, godmother, friend, cook, gardener, and a **NURSE** to so many.

**"A True Server to Humanity"**