

Lindsay Holmstrom:

Nursing is maybe one of the most diverse and dynamic professions that there are. You could be, literally, a CEO if you're a nurse. You can be a bedside nurse. You could do care manager. You could do sales. You could do any kind of off-branch research. Don't close any doors. Keep all of those doors open, and keep those possibilities there because you won't believe where you'll be in 10 or 15 years from when you start.

Speaker 6:

On the season finale of Pathways, nursing careers can lead you down several different paths to different specialties, different settings, and even to leadership.

Emily Tadlock:

Welcome to the Pathways Podcast. I'm your host, Emily Tadlock, and this is the final episode of our nursing season. So we started from the bottom, and now we're here. Can I say that? I'm not sure if that's copyrighted or not, but in other words, we started with nurses fresh out of school, and now we're wrapping things up with nurse leadership. So I'm joined by nurse leader Shannon Jagger, and our ADP of Clinical Professional Development, Lindsay Holmstrom. Thanks for joining me ladies.

Shannon Jagger:

Thanks for having us.

Emily Tadlock:

Okay, so first things first, let's let you guys introduce yourselves a little bit and tell me a little bit about your title, what you do. So Shannon, why don't we start with you?

Shannon Jagger:

Sure. I'm Shannon Jagger. I'm the Director of Nursing Excellence. And in my role I really ensure that nursing services here at Eastern Maine Medical Center are aligned with best practices for positive practice environments. So making sure that our nurses work in an environment where they can thrive and deliver safe, high-quality care.

Emily Tadlock:

Awesome. Okay. And you Lindsay?

Lindsay Holmstrom:

Yeah, I'm Lindsay. I'm the AVP over clinical professional development for Northern Light Health. And started my career as a frontline nurse and worked in different roles, at the bedside in various roles. And then I did a little project management and now I'm working development. My role is new to the system. They haven't actually had this job before. So just working on how we're going to make professional development across the system better for clinicians, create different opportunities, and restructure and standardize our current processes.

Emily Tadlock:

Wow. Okay. So brand new position. That's exciting. So why don't we start here first. Tell me where you guys started. Where'd you go to school? How long did you go to school for, and what nursing specialty did you start in?

Shannon Jagger:

Yeah, so I can start. I went to the University of Maine. I actually grew up in Orrington, so I'm a native, you could say. I went to UMaine for four years and I started on Grant 6. So I did my partnership on Grant 6 with a wonderful nurse who I still credit a lot of my development to. Can I give names?

Emily Tadlock:

Of course.

Shannon Jagger:

Bond Blake, shout out to him. I actually took my first nursing job right out of school on Grant 6. I got a job on the day shift, and at that time that was very exciting to be able to get day shift on the unit where you did your partnership. So I worked there for about two years and then I took on the assistant manager role on that unit.

I think naturally I've always fallen into leadership roles. And so throughout that two years, I just really saw, I want to make a difference in a different way with the people that I work with. So I took on that role. And then later became the nurse manager of acute rehab. So total different type of nursing, whole new environment, new group of nurses. That really taught me a lot. That was a really fabulous experience that I had.

And when in that role, I really got the quality improvement bug. I became so interested in improving quality outcomes and what goes into motivating nurses to improve the care. And so there were some significant improvements that those nurses made during that time where I said, "I think I want to do this full time." So my job actually was new about two years ago.

I spoke with Deb Sanford, the CNO here. I said, I think this could be a really important role, Director of Nursing Excellence. A lot of large medical centers have this role and to really drive quality experience from the nursing side. And so she took that chance on me during that time and really thankful for that opportunity to really spread some of that important work that we've done on those units and make it a broader scale.

Emily Tadlock:

I love it.

Shannon Jagger:

So I would never have said that. I think that's something interesting about leadership. It's not like that was my plan. But the opportunities are here at Northern Light where you meet the right people, they have the opportunities to develop you. Then it just comes naturally. But it wouldn't be possible without the opportunities that are here.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

And I think that's, to piggyback on that, being open to the opportunities and the pathways that are available to you. You think starting as a nurse is just like, "Oh, I'm going to be a nurse forever." No. Nursing is maybe one of the most diverse and dynamic professions that there are. You could be, literally, a CEO if you're a nurse. You can be a bedside nurse. You could do care manager. You could do sales. You could do any kind of off-branch research.

So to Shannon's point, being open and following the path as it unfolds for you, you don't always think this is where I'm going to be. And if looking back, I'm older than Shannon, so I'm like, "Ph wow, let me listen to her career." And I'm like, "Okay, well, yeah." So for me, I was similar story, but started out at bedside. I started on Merit 3. So I grew up at Eastern Maine Medical Center, which is awesome. Start on evening

shift and then dabbled in some overnight stuff. But then I was not fortunate to get my, I did my partnership there and then it was a different time when I was here. You didn't get your first choice when you were in nursing school back then. So I worked that shift and then actually would say, I actually started as a CNA in nursing school.

Emily Tadlock:

Okay. Yeah.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

So right at the end of my college time, I was seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and I'm like, "I'm going to dabble in this CNA thing." So I went and did that, which was the most amazing thing I probably could have ever done. It prepared me so much better than I thought it ever would to become a nurse. So then after becoming a nurse, I really felt like I understood the base of the job, in a lot of ways and how to work really well with your CNA.

So did the CNA thing. Became a nurse. Did the nurse thing. I kind of fell into leadership. I would say I had a propensity for leadership, in general. Growing up, I was always, found my way in a situation where I was either captain of a team, whatever. I like to help teams accomplish major goals. It was fun for me, even as a kid, I can remember. I'm like Monica from Friends. I'm like, "Come on, we can make it fun. Structure makes it fun." That's me. So I always have been that person. So anyway, but I actually learned from a patient safety program that inspired me here at Eastern Maine Medical Center. I started learning how to teach a course, at the time, and it was all geared around process improvement, patient safety, getting better outcomes for our patients.

And that led me onto a path where I got to be a clinical project manager, which was, so I went pretty much right from the bedside to clinical project management. And I had done a few different roles, med surg, PACU, a little critical care mixed in there. Ultimately I found my passion when I got to the leadership role of clinical project management because there we were, taking clinical issues, problems, projects, and taking it to the next level. And I was a nurse, so I had this whole different perspective. That was really cool. I did that and that led me into management, which I did. Shout out to Gina Gillette.

Shannon Jagger:

Shout out.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

She was my mentor and got me going in leadership. And then I left for a little bit, did some time at a mission-based hospital locally. And then did some work in school health. And here I am. So the cool part now I feel like is all those different experiences have brought us forward to this point where you're open to those things as they come up in your career. And I guess for nurses that are just starting out, I would look at them and think, don't close any doors. Keep all of those doors open and keep those possibilities there because you won't believe where you'll be in 10 or 15 years from when you start.

Emily Tadlock:

That's such a great way to put it. And there's different levels to leadership, too. So you guys are pretty up there, but there's other types of leadership that aren't necessarily an AVP or a director. Let's talk about those a little bit.

Shannon Jagger:

I think something that I always say is all nurses are leaders in one way. Whether you're leading that patient's care for that day or you're a charge nurse on a unit, or maybe you're more of a senior nurse in your unit and you have someone that you're precepting or students. So I truly believe that, saying that all nurses are leaders in the community. But there's certainly different levels, which we've talked about. So charge nurse, relief charge nurse.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

And informal leadership. Maybe if you're not in those roles, the charge is more of a formal leadership role or staff nurse, one or two. And there's manager, assistant manager. But the informal leadership, so nurses that just really maybe enjoy what they do and they really want to make it better, they get involved in committee work and they get in shared governance. So there's lots of ways I think a nurse can be a leader even if they're not in a formal role. And actually I think that's probably how both of us ended up into this. We both did chart, we both got involved and there was always like, "Oh, we want to be better at this. Will you run this group?" And I remember being on a staff improvement committee, a staff morale, a boosting committee, or the Sunshine Fund club. Any opportunity there was to do something to make things better, I would jump right in and do it. And my manager knew that about me.

Emily Tadlock:

So how do we encourage other nurses to become nurse leaders? Even with an actual title, like assistant manager or manager charge, how do we encourage other nurses to take a step-up and do that?

Lindsay Holmstrom:

I'd say give it a little time. Work for a little bit, a year or two. Really understand clinically what you're doing and then develop yourself. So invest in yourself in terms of, what can you do to become certified, to take your knowledge base to the next level. Get on a committee. From my perspective, I think that development leads you to those open doors. Those opportunities will present themselves if you take the initiative to develop yourself, if that's something you are interested in doing. And some folks are more interested in those formal leadership roles. But that's what I would say.

Emily Tadlock:

Shannon?

Shannon Jagger:

I think that we said we fell into it, but I don't think that's really true. Going back to what you said about developing yourself, I always say, "Shannon, why'd you go back to school and get these certifications?" And I don't want an opportunity to present itself down the road and we need this education and not have it. So I think to think, I might not know what I want to do with my master's in nursing or what I want to do if I get my bachelor's, but I know that that's going to open some doors for me. And I know at Northern Light Health, we really support, we have programs that support nurses going back and then really investing in themselves.

And then something I talk about a lot with a Pathway to Excellence work is leadership is certainly a skill. Some people are born with it, but no one just shows up every day and knows how to be a good leader. And so it's important to continually invest in yourself, take advantage of opportunities, courses that are offered through Northern Light Health. There's so many. And again, that can just help people, nurses see, what am I interested in? What would I be interested in leading? And supporting them through it. No one should be alone as they develop in leadership because certainly you need that support. And so I think showing that we have that here, that you can have a mentor, you're not alone, really helps.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

And I think, to your point on mentorship, when you're a new nurse, you find a mentor. Obviously, you have partnership, you're partnered up with somebody. But you find yourself creating these connections with people that have done it a little longer than you or can give you advice or guidance. And those people believe in you. And so they teach you how to become a great nurse. But you also have to believe in yourself. You eventually, we use the analogy, you crawl for a little bit, then you get up and you start to walk with holding onto stuff, and then you let go. But you have to believe in yourself. And I'm sure if you have a mentor, you've leaning on those leaders in your department, there's going to come a time where the new nurses are looking to you. And about that time is when you want to take an opportunity to take advantage, like Shannon said, of the tuition reimbursement, all the programs. It's never been a better time to develop yourself at Northern Light Health. And now, I think.

Emily Tadlock:

Okay, so it's so good that you said that and you mentioned that. So let's talk about some of these advancement opportunities. And you guys also mentioned certifications and things like that. Lindsay, let's start with you. What are some of the programs that we offer here at Northern Light Health to help grow our nurse leadership?

Lindsay Holmstrom:

From a nurse leadership perspective at Eastern Maine Medical Center, if you're starting out as a nurse, we had talked about different pathways. You can get on shared governance in your local unit level leadership. Opportunities and different committees, I could, Shannon obviously is very entrenched in all of that with her performance improvement work and her excellence work. So she can probably speak more specifically to each committee.

But in general, getting involved at that level. And then you can go back to school after you've been an employee here for a certain amount of time. There's a reimbursement schedule that you can get certain dollar amount for whatever degree you're going back for. And so that's something I would say for folks that are willing to do that. And then each certification that you can get, if you love your specialty that you're in, wherever you are, you can do national certification, which is a process. You have to have a certain number of clinical hours in that area that are relevant. And then you're allowed to study and practice for that exam. And I think that's another way you can develop yourself here.

Shannon Jagger:

I just thought too about the opportunities, the PACE program that we have at Northern Light Health. I don't know if all members have it.

Emily Tadlock:

A lot of them do, yeah.

Shannon Jagger:

So the PACE program is a clinical development ladder for nurses. And so there are certain competencies that you can meet to get different levels. So staff nurse, 1, 2, 3, 4, beyond. And so I think when it seems overwhelming of, what do I do next? Should I get a certification? Do I go back to school? What committees do I join? It gives a guide of, all right, here's some opportunities, here's what you need for the different levels. And it really just helps give that guidance. Again, there can be mentors or peers that nurses interested in the career ladder will reach out to and be like, "Hey, I see you're a staff nurse too. How did you get there?" And I think that has really helped a lot of nurses just feel a little less burdened with this overwhelming, like, "How do I get started?"

And give them that path so they feel like they're working towards something. It's not like they just come to work every day, clock in and clock out. That there really is a set path forward. But for specialty certifications, we are part of ANCC's Success Pays program. So for certain certifications through the ANCC, we do offer a voucher program. So a nurse would not have to pay upfront for that certification because they can be few hundred dollars typically. So really investing in staff and providing that support. Again, if it was something outside of the ANCC, we typically have some reimbursement opportunities there as well. But I think supporting in that way is really important.

Emily Tadlock:

So support in general is offered for nurses to take this step and move up and grow and move forward and figure out their passion and where they want to be. That's what I'm hearing from the two of you.

Shannon Jagger:

Yeah, absolutely.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

And most unit level, if you're in a department or a certain specialty or whatever, there's opportunity for if you have an idea that you just think, I want to make this thing better that we do, you can work with your local leadership. And they usually will be like, "Yeah, absolutely." We are constantly striving and creating goals that we're trying to get better at metrics. So if there's something you want to help, whether it's reducing falls, pressure injuries, something on your unit, and you work with your local leadership, they will support you in getting involved in doing that actual work at the frontline, which for some nurses, that's what they're passionate. They really want to be a leader in a very specific clinical outcome. They want to be the best at something in particular.

And I think that's a unique opportunity for them to lead in a more granular level, at the grassroots level with nursing.

Emily Tadlock:

And really the opportunities are pretty much endless. Gosh, Shannon, you created your own. And now there's a brand new one that was created for you, Lindsey. So I think the vision's there, it's exciting. The leadership....

Shannon Jagger:

Leadership is ready.

Emily Tadlock:

Is ready. Northern Light's primed for really positive change. And I think engaging nurses at the frontline and through every level of leadership is what it's going to take to deal with the healthcare dynamics and outcomes that we need to tackle. And it's not a secret that healthcare in Maine is really facing some critical needs, shortages, care quality outcomes. There's so much to it. But nurses being a part of that fight is going to be really important.

Shannon Jagger:

Absolutely. Yeah. And Maine needs nurses.

Emily Tadlock:

Oh, big time.

Shannon Jagger:

Yeah.

Emily Tadlock:

There's a lot of stereotypes around leadership. People can sometimes think leaders are stiff or there's not as much flexibility in being a leader. But that's not the case.

Shannon Jagger:

Yeah, definitely not. I think something that's important is really to bring humor to the workplace and to show that leadership can be fun. It can be for younger people, older people. It's not just you need to work 40 years to enter leadership.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

And that's the bad rap. We talk about this stereotype, this stiffness, this, whatever.

Emily Tadlock:

I've been here 100 years, so now I get to be the charge nurse. So now I get to be...

Lindsay Holmstrom:

Right. And the stigma of leadership, I think, ultimately good leaders, it doesn't matter how old you are, you bring that sense of honesty, transparency, and a sense of realness. And I think obviously to be in healthcare, you have to have a sense of humor. Spoiler alert. Nurses have maybe the darkest senses of humor of anyone you'll ever meet. But in leadership, it's even next level funny. You have to be open and real with your teams because then they have a sense of respect. This person, I can see that this person is genuinely passionate about what they're doing, and I can get on board with what they're asking me to do because I'm connected to this leader. And I think Shannon does that really well. I try to do that really well. It's just be real. Talk about the real issues and get there.

And you can have a sense of humor. And we would not be sitting here had we not had a sense of humor along the way because you need to decompress. And leaders maybe are some of the people that need to decompress the most. Really and truly. And we find a way to do that. It's awesome. And you can be in your 20s as a leader in this organization or in your 60s and 70s as a leader in this organization and still excel in that role and bring your sense of humor to the workplace. If you don't, it's going to be a long road. So bring it. We just say bring it?

Emily Tadlock:

I'm sure people have gotten some good chuckles out of this podcast. Absolutely. I know I have.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

Hope so. I hope so.

Emily Tadlock:

You have the microphone. Maybe you should be a stand-up comic.

Shannon Jagger:

She does some of that.



Lindsay Holmstrom:

I did add a new karaoke song on the ride in today to my repertoire, so I don't want to bust it. I'll give you a teaser. It's Brooks and Dunn.

Emily Tadlock:

Oh, okay.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

Brand new man. But I'm going to change the word man to ma'am, so I've decided to, right.

Shannon Jagger:

I like it.

Lindsay Holmstrom:

Meet me over at Mad Cats, I'll sing it to you. Just kidding.

Emily Tadlock:

So I think this is a great conversation, ladies. Is there anything else, a last thought that you'd like to leave with our listeners?

Shannon Jagger:

Great question. I think I'm just going wrap up what you said in the beginning, and that is to keep every door open. You talked about a nurse may be really interested in improving something on their unit, and just to go for that. Jump in with both feet. You don't have to want to be a leader, but just be open to the opportunities and getting that experience under your belt and whatever interests you. And I think staying within this organization, I personally could not be more thankful that I started working here nine years ago without leaders that invested in me and programs that helped support me. I've been able to go further than I ever imagined that I would go and do things I never imagined I would do. And so I encourage nurses to stick it out,

Lindsay Holmstrom:

So to the whole leave the door open thing and develop yourself. I would say, to Shannon, sort of the same sentiment Shannon shared about feeling so fortunate for what Northern Light has provided us, both individually, obviously on separate paths, separate decades almost. I'm not that much older than, but truly I have left for many years and now come back. And I can say, for sure and for certain, that the opportunities that were provided to me here at this medical center and in this healthcare system were what has made me who I am today in leadership, in passion for the field and for just wanting to make things better.

There is an internal striving for excellence that I think Northern Light really has their fingers on the pulse of, and they're giving those opportunities to nurses. So to leave the door open and to be open for opportunity is something that everyone here should do because you just don't know where that path is going to take you. And if you have leadership in your heart and that's something that you're passionate about, there are just endless opportunities to develop that and become a great leader and really make a difference in healthcare and in our community and across the state.

Emily Tadlock:



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Awesome. Thank you so much, ladies, for being on with me today. Very last episode of our season on nursing. I think this is a great way to leave it out. And yeah, I just appreciate you both so much.

Shannon Jagger:

Thank you for having us.

Speaker 6:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Pathways. There are several ways you can tune in. On our website at [northernlighthealth.org/healthyhappywise](http://northernlighthealth.org/healthyhappywise). We are also on Apple, YouTube, and Spotify, which makes it easy for you to listen, on the go, on your favorite app.