

00:19 - 00:49

Doug Bryant

Thank you for joining us today for Certify It, the podcast for advancing your career in care. I'm here today with Sue Casey, who is one of our instructors here at the Mason Center for Healthcare Education. And we're going to be talking a little bit today. So I want to talk about your experience being an instructor here. What it's been like over the last year. You've been with us since the beginning. So you are going to be able to share a lot of knowledge with us, but tell the audience a little bit about how you got into nursing to begin with.

00:49 - 01:54

Sue Casey

So I'm when I started nursing school when I was 18, I always knew, probably from 9 or 10 years old, I wanted to be a nurse. And back then, you know, there wasn't a whole lot I'd say back then because, you know, it was a long time ago. There weren't a lot of professions for women, you know, it was either a teacher or a nurse, basically.

But I always knew I wanted to be a nurse. So I went to nursing school, and I chose a diploma program because I felt like that was the best at the time. And that's what I did. And I was 21 when I graduated. And then, I've done many different things. Over the years. I've worked in the emergency room.

I've worked in education. As far as the staff development coordinator. I was a school nurse for a little while when we lived in Japan. So I've had and I did long-term care for many, many years, and I loved long-term care. And I also loved the rehab part of long-term care and the skilled area.

01:54 - 02:04

Doug Bryant

Okay. Well, that's very interesting. So during all of those things that you did as a nurse, and I know that you actually were an assistant director of nursing for us for Hillcrest.

02:04

Sue Casey

Yes.

02:04 - 02:24

Doug Bryant

And so was there a defining moment in your career that sparked your interest in combining those two professions that you said you kind of felt limited to, which were nursing and teaching, and you just kind of crammed them together? And here we are. So what was that defining moment that made you think I would like to actually teach?

02:24 - 04:55

Sue Casey

So there were two defining moments. Actually, there was one when I was a staff development coordinator. I had not started that yet. I was actually doing unit manager, and I had an administrator whose parents were in teaching, and she pulled me into her office, and she said, I don't think you're using all of your skills, and I see so much education in you that you could teach so many people.

I was doing a lot of in-services just because that was part of my role as unit manager, and she was a fabulous administrator, and she put me as SDC, and I did a lot of education, a lot of teaching, and I loved it. However, I wasn't sure I still wanted to do that forever. And another job became available that I did end up switching.

But then, when I was, during COVID, we had to do a lot of education. We had to always be educating people, like, even the public, like how many people asked nurses questions, but mostly in our building that I worked at, and it was one of our Hillcrest buildings. And there was a lot of education to be done so that people could survive and come to work every day without being scared to death.

A lot of education for our patients. So once I was ready to make a change, I decided I wanted to teach CNAs. Because in the world of Covid, we became short-staffed at that time. And I felt like I could reach out to CNAs and reach out to people and teach them, they we needed more really good people. And so that's when I came to the Mason Center. And then a lot of our people just want to help people. They want to do things for people. We've had housekeepers come through who see what is going on in healthcare, and they love our little people, and they want to do better by them.

So we've had some housekeepers come through who have been fabulous. And we've had a lot of people that we can train to do this job, that it's not just anybody you can train, not anybody can do this. They have to have a heart for it, and they have to be special people. And the ones that make it to the end of our course and go on are fabulous. They usually are fabulous, fabulous people. And I felt like I could help that in the world, in the, in our, in our little world of Knoxville. To do that.

04:55 - 05:18

Doug Bryant

I think one of the understated statements of the year is seeing CNAs are truly the backbone of the organization. Absolutely. We can't do and serve the people that we serve without CNAs. So if there were prospective students that are watching this today, what would you say is one of the biggest misconceptions about the role of a CNA?

05:18 - 06:01

Sue Casey

That you don't matter and that they're easily replaced? If the doctor doesn't show up one day, that place is still going to run. Our facilities are going to run just fine without the doctor. They will run short-staffed on nurses a lot of times, but you need those CNAs, and those little people

depend on them every morning. Every night, all night long. They are calling their CNAs. And CNAs know the patients better than anybody else in the building. And I always tell them, I say, if you ever think you have a job, that you're not making a difference, and you want to make a difference, a CNA is the job because you change people's lives every single day.

06:01 - 06:07

Doug Bryant

So what are some of the biggest challenges that your students face during training that you've seen?

06:07 - 06:58

Sue Casey

Well, if they've never been in health care before and a lot of people are scared, but they still have decided they want to pursue it, it might be a little bit traumatic for them at the beginning because they've not even seen sick people, you know? And these people are people who are older, and they're living there, and maybe they don't have family who come every day.

And I always tell them, we are making the last part of their life the best part of their life. And if we can do that and make their life fabulous every day and make sure they make it to activities and work as a team with all of our employees, you know, make sure that you get them the food they love. Make sure you bring them to activities. Make sure you take care of them and do all those things, and treat them with so much respect that you can change their life and make it better.

06:58 - 07:15

Doug Bryant

So what I'm hearing from you is that if I'm a student in your class, skills are part of the teaching, correct? The bookwork knowledge is part of the teaching. Yes, but it sounds like you really interject empathy. Yes. And compassion there. How do you do that with a new generation of people?

07:15 - 07:20

Sue Casey

Well, I probably overtell stories. You know, a short story is the best way for people to learn. And that's what I do. I tell them a lot of stories that can change people and change little parts of their day, every single day. And that's what I do. I tell them, you know, things that have families have said to CNAs before. I've had, you know, well, we always teach CNAs. You go to the nurse, you'll never make a phone call to a family, you know, let the nurse handle that, I said, but there will be families that come in, and they don't want to talk to the nurse.

They only want to talk to you, and they want to know what the person is doing. And that's where there's always that fine line of, you know, what to tell them, what they need to know. But make sure you let the nurse handle the medical part. But they want to know from the CNA how their mom has done that day, and that they know the CNA has those answers.

Mid-Roll

You're listening to Certify It, the podcast for advancing your career in care. Brought to you by Propel Insurance. Find innovative insurance solutions in the toughest risk management environments. Over 500 senior care providers nationwide trust Propel to keep their business thriving. Find your momentum with Propel Insurance.

08:33 - 08:45

Doug Bryant

So all teachers have stories of students that stick out in their minds. Some good, some bad, I'm sure. So, is there a particular student and a story that you could share with us about?

08:45 - 09:49

Sue Casey

Yeah. So we had a girl, she was one of ours. She's a fabulous young girl. She was working; she went to work in housekeeping at one of the Hillcrest buildings, and she decided to come to the CNA class. And she really struggled through the whole class, but it was really hard for her. And, she ended up making it, and she still texts me to this day.

You know, and she was in one of our first, one of our earlier classes. And she's very successful. She's still working at one of our buildings, and she loves it. I've had students work with her, and the students loved her, and she'll even text me that night, you know, she'll let me know how they did.

And she hoped that she had done well. Was there anything she could do better? And she was. She's she was just fabulous. And she really had not ever really had a great job. Her mother died when she was young, and just had a rough time in her life. And she ended up doing so well. And she's doing so well.

09:49 - 10:15

Doug Bryant

Very good. So our students gain a lot of knowledge from you because of just the amount of experience that you have. And as you being a seasoned professional, you bring something to the table that not every student gets to sit under, but they come. So what would be one thing that you think sets the classes apart here at the Mason Center for Healthcare Education from maybe any other CNA class that is out there?

10:15 - 10:16

Sue Casey

Because I'm teaching it.

10:16 - 10:19

Doug Bryant

Of course, other than the fact that you're teaching.

10:19 - 11:33

Sue Casey

We have a fabulous curriculum, and our curriculum is longer than most. I've met several other instructors. They do clinicals at some of the Hillcrest buildings while I've been there, and I always ask the instructors, you know, they've been at different, local places, and their classes are not as long as ours. Our class is much longer.

And we offer like they can come in extra if they ever need to. We figure things out for them, and we work really hard to make them successful and to help them be successful. And I also think that our clinicals are a little bit longer than others, which I think is really important. If we could even like, I know the regulations, we have to finish the class, but it's like they always want to hurry up and jump in and get to the clinicals.

So I know we can't, but I always let them start skills first very early on because when they get into the lab, they're like, this is so much fun. I love doing this. We're going to get to do this with real people, you know, and it makes them feel like they're already progressing. So I think the Mason Center has so much to offer with the way that the program is set up. You know, just everything about it is fabulous.

11:33 - 11:53

Doug Bryant

So, how does the setup at the Mason Center with the on-hand skills lab, the clinical sites that we have available, and the link? How does that prepare students for the exams? What are some of the things that you do specifically as an instructor that maybe add that little extra to help them prepare for that state exam?

11:53 - 13:36

Sue Casey

So the little things, like when you make a bed, make sure that the sheets are even, make sure you're doing all that. Make sure you're treating the patient with dignity and respect. And they are so careful during all the skills, saying, I'm going to keep you covered. I'm not going to let anything. You're not going to let yourself be exposed.

I'm going to make sure you're comfortable. And we make that a very big deal, you know. And I will tell them, you know, pretend this is your dad or your grandfather, you know, and he's lying in the bed, and you just come in and pull the covers back. How does that person feel? You know, and different things. And they've they've just learned so much, and they really get such good experience with the skills part and with the knowledge because we have a test every week.

But with the skills part, they get so much experience. And then we go into clinicals, and they're attached to a student's hip. But I mean, CNAs, I stay right attached with them, go with them, watch everything they do, listen to how they talk to the patients. And it's just funny because after

all the skills and after everything in class where we're here for five weeks, they go in thinking, oh, I think I know how to do this.

And they get in and they're like, they ask the CNA, they say, when you started clinicals, did you feel like you didn't know anything? And they said, Oh yeah, you're going to feel like every minute you're learning something. And that's what they've all said at the end of the and we meet at the end of every class, and we talk about what they did, what was scary, what was good, what we can change. And at the end of the eight days of clinicals, they have such a good feeling about the test, about getting to work, and they just can't wait to dig their feet in and get to work.

13:36 - 14:06

Doug Bryant

So the first part of what you said when you started that was you talked about the way that you even talked to the resident. It reminds me of the conversation I had with David Snyder, one of our health care partners, when she said one thing that they really appreciated about the Mason center was that we weren't just teaching people how to do the skill right. We were teaching them how to act while doing the skill, which is something that caretakers, it's almost a lost art.

14:06 - 14:51

Sue Casey

Yes. Well, and just like when they first come in, and a lot of times, like we have, you know, a list of what they need to do and everything, and they'll come in and all of a sudden they're raising the bed in there and they're positioning the patient, and I say, Hold on a minute. What are you doing? I'm like trying to sleep here because they haven't explained to the patient, and that will remind them, and they will never forget, like they have to tell the patient what they're doing every step of the way.

And it's helpful to them, you know, and it's reading the, the, all of the skill parts out loud, lets them explain to the patient what they're doing. And I think that that's a huge part of learning the whole aspect of person-centered care.

14:51 - 15:03

Doug Bryant

So with all of the students that you've instructed, there's got to be some common characteristics that you see that make someone not just a good CNA, but a great one. What are some of those?

15:03 - 15:41

Sue Casey

I think people who have maybe cared for a loved one over the years, maybe they lost their grandmother when they were very young, and it was traumatic because they were so young. Maybe they lost their parents. But even if they didn't have a traumatic event, they may have had jobs that they didn't have. They just didn't ever feel important. And they felt like this is where

their little niche would be. And I think that, and they are the ones that have really done well and done just great things and are fabulous with patients.

15:41 - 15:53

Doug Bryant

So many of the CNAs go on to be LPNs, and a lot of times, that CNA role is the starting point for someone's career in health care. So how do you encourage that growth?

15:53 - 16:52

Sue Casey

So I always tell them that, you know, always do so many things in health care in general, and with our students.

You know, we have several that have gone on, and I always have my new class when we get to a building that they've gone on and they've started at the Mason center, and then they're NLP, and now we have several, and I always have them talk to those people because it's wonderful. They want they give them, you know, the push and the positivity that they need, that, you know, you can do this, you know, and when they're like, you know, I didn't think I could ever do that. And I, you know, barely passed CNA class or I could barely do. And here they are on a med card, and that, you know, it's good for the students to see that.

16:52 - 17:18

Doug Bryant

Well, thank you so much for spending time with me today and talking about this one thing.

Before we go that I want, I would like to ask you if there is one piece of advice that you could give a prospective student that's sitting out there on the fence, whether they want to be a CNA or not, they're not real. They may be a little nervous. What is that one piece of advice that you would hope sticks with people who choose to pursue a career?

17:18 - 18:05

Sue Casey

Just do it. You know the sky's the limit in anything you can do. And if you're at a job where you don't feel like you're changing lives every single day, if you don't get up in the morning and love what you do, if you're just like, I'm going to work, oh, I can't wait for Friday. Oh, I can't, you know, in all the years I've worked, I never, ever felt like that.

I loved my job every single day. I loved going to wherever it was that I worked. And I think you always have to feel that passion. And if you want to be a CNA, that's a great place to start, and there is never going to be another job where people need you as much as they need you, or that you feel the gratification that you feel. So just come on and apply and get in here.

18:05 - 18:17

Doug Bryant

All right. Well, thank you so much. We are so blessed to have you as an instructor here at the Mason Center. Thank you. And again, thank you so much for giving me some of your time today and sharing with the audience.

18:17 - 18:18

Sue Casey

My pleasure.

18:18 - 18:23

Doug Bryant

This has been Certify It, the podcast for advancing your career and care. We'll see you next time.