

Upwork Customer:

PMA Media Group (Digital Marketing Agency)

Completed:

August 2020

Website:

www.aspiringnurse.com



Description:

1. Be self-motivated, self-sufficient, and work independently
2. Manage the project from start to finish
3. Communicate regularly and attend weekly update calls
4. Find nurses that meet very specific criteria - location, motivation, type of nurse, affected by pandemic, compelling story, etc.
5. Schedule and conduct interviews
6. Coordinate project with client, colleges, and nurses
7. Write a 1,200 to 1,300-word story and gain client approval
8. Post and proof each story in WordPress

Testimonial:

"Debby's work on this project was exemplary. Her professionalism, attention to detail and more importantly tenacity is top notch. Her main skill, however, is her ability to rapidly align outcomes in an efficient manner. A must hire for any organization!" Terrence Thomas, PMA Media Group, 8/2020

Published at <https://aspiringnurse.com/a-story-of-true-perseverance/>

A Story of True Perseverance

By Debby Wadsworth, Freelance Writer



Perseverance is a complex virtue. For some people, it is a divinely inspired gift. While for others, it seems to be their inner strength. It feeds the tenacity and willpower felt in the face of challenges. If you add it to knowing what you want, where you want to go, and why, you can become a powerful force for maintaining one's course despite obstacles. Beth Oelkers, a nursing student in Scottsdale, Arizona, has the gift, inner drive, and focus on preserving to become a Registered Nurse (RN) no matter what life throws at her.

She'll be an RN – despite age

Beth Oelkers has been interested in helping people all her life. She talks about it with a sparkle in her eye and a smile on her face. "There were two things I always wanted to do, teaching and nursing," Oelkers said. Entering college at Purdue University, she thought long and hard about her two passions. Oelkers was torn between teaching and nursing. She looked to God's guidance when making her final decision, and teaching won. Oelkers earned her undergraduate degree in education & special education, followed by earning a master's degree. Her teaching career was off and running.

For over ten years, Oelkers genuinely enjoyed her career, teaching in Texas, Indiana, and Arizona. "I taught Kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, 5th grades, and worked as a reading specialist,"

Oelkers said. "I loved being in the classroom for many years, teaching them, seeing their light bulbs turn on." Plus, she enjoyed one incredibly special year, when one of her Kindergarten students was her daughter.

But into her second decade of teaching, her passion for it began to fade. Torn on what to do, she started having discussions about it with her husband. She decided to leave teaching. "I left when the paperwork got more daunting than the fun," Oelkers explained. "I decided to come home to be with my kids in high school."

During the years Oelkers was home, she spent a lot of time taking care of her parents. Her mother had a brain aneurysm, followed by a brain injury, and had to endure multiple surgeries. Little did she know the inner strength and faith her mother showed would become an inspiration for her in the coming years.

The experience with her mother's illness reignited her passion for nursing. "It made me realize I always wanted to be a nurse," Oelkers said. She volunteered to work with high school students interested in the healthcare field, and her passion for nursing grew even stronger. "I remember sitting at home and talking it over with my husband," Oelkers said. "He said, why don't you do it. You have always wanted to, now what is stopping you?" After further thought, she concluded, "I felt I knew what I wanted to do, pursue my passion for nursing." Oelkers explained. She had the support of her family and could finally dedicate time to becoming a nurse.

Driven with excitement nearly to the point of nearly being giddy, Oelkers started her journey to becoming a nurse. Oelkers knew she wanted to work in hospitals and began to investigate the requirements. She found hospital work for a nurse required a Bachelor of Science, Nursing (BSN) program. Oelkers also found to apply for a BSN program; she needed to become eligible.

To be eligible for a BSN nursing program, applicants must have complete required prerequisite courses. It meant going back to school at 40 something. "Going back to school is hard," Oelkers said. "I am used to being the teacher, not the student." After a few sleepless nights, "I got the guts to walk into the first Anatomy and Physiology class, and it was rough being an older student," Oelkers said.

Oelkers also began researching nursing schools. She selected, applied, and was accepted to the Concurrent Enrollment Program (CEP) at the Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation at Arizona State University (ASU). She chose ASU because she felt it had a great program, it was right there in the valley, and their people worked with her.

She'll be an RN – despite a brain tumor

While all of this was going on, the migraine headaches Oelkers had suffered from for years became worse. They grew in intensity to the point of her enduring severe untreatable pain 24/7. She knew something wasn't right and made an appointment to visit a doctor. A long list of tests was completed including, an MRI, and Oelkers waited on pins and needles for the results.

Her husband accompanied her to the doctor's office, which he normally didn't do, to find out the results. Oelkers said she was glad he did, especially when the doctor began by saying I called you with the results but did not want to leave a message. Oelkers's heart sank, and the rest of the visit became a blur as the doctor went on to tell them she had a brain tumor along with all the related details. She hoped her husband was listening as her thoughts were spinning.

Having been hit with a devastating blow, it took her a while to grasp and accept it. She found strength in her faith, family, friends, and the inner strength her mother had shown when she endured brain surgery. They went to Barrow's Neurological Institute for further tests. Her diagnosis was confirmed, she had the best of the worst in brain tumors, and the plan of care was to monitor the tumor growth, make changes in her medications and diet.

After what she called a "pity party," she once again drew from her mother's inspiration, her own inner strength, faith, family, friends, and went on with her life the best she could. Oelkers was ecstatic about nursing school and looked forward to the adventure beginning. The idea of fulfilling her passion of becoming a Registered Nurse (RN) brought so much excitement and hope. Her enthusiasm was rattled a bit when she started her first day of nursing school. She remembers thinking, "Oh my goodness, what am I doing. These kids are going to be my kids' age." But her anxiety levels diminished as she met other students and started new friendships.

Faith, Inner Strength & Tenacity move mountains

Her life was going great! She loved the school, her professors, advisor, and classes. Oelkers was well on her way to becoming an RN. Her family was doing great including a daughter in medical school and a son working at Apple. But her bubble would soon burst when the severe headaches returned. This time they were even worse than before. Nothing the doctors could give her would deaden the pain.

She was understandably upset, scared, and worried. It threatened everything including her life. She prayed with her pastor and drew from her faith in God, inspiration from her mother, inner strength, and family to endure what was ahead. But this time, the doctors told them it was time to take the brain tumor out. She felt panic, and her world was once again spinning out of control. Doctors talked about three procedures and wanted her to select one.

This time she knew more what the doctors said from what she had learned in her anatomy class and nursing school. Her daughter was also there to fill in what she had learned from medical school. Together they decided to proceed with a Translabrynthine Craniectomy. The procedure would enter her skull behind her left ear to extract the tumor. Of course, there were many risks involved, like with any brain surgery.

The worst outcome would be loss of life, followed by a long list of potential complications. There could be a stroke, seizures, swelling of the brain, nerve damage, impaired mental function, facial paralysis, infection, plus potential complications from anesthesia. In the end, she would also sacrifice the hearing in her left ear to ensure the neurosurgeon was able to get out all of the tumor.

Her mind raced as she tried to make sense of it all. What about her dream of becoming a nurse? She had to address that too in the midst of it all. Oelkers pushed away from the tears and made an appointment to meet with her advisor. Oelkers was in the CEP program and taking classes to earn her ADN at a community college, while at the same time taking classes at ASU for her BSN. If she had to take a leave of absence from the community college, she would have to do the same for ASU. Her advisor went to bat for her, and Edson College made her a special exception, so she was able to continue with her ASU coursework when she was ready.

Despite having to deal with so many emotions and facing so many unknowns, Oelkers was hopeful. She put it in God's hands and knew her family, friends, nursing school, and RN career would be there waiting for her. She endured the surgery and woke up with severe

complications. “The first 48 hours were filled with nausea, and nothing worked to treat it,” Oelkers said. “The only way I can describe it is was like looking at a whiteboard that keeps spinning to the left and then right.” Within a few days of her week in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), the spinning went away. But she had many other complications to overcome. “This is beyond frustrating,” Oelkers said, “Everyone is scared I have brain damage.”

She went home, started outpatient therapy, and drew strength from her faith, family, friends to persevere through it all. “I remember watching the Today Show and thinking wow they have so many misspelled words,” Oelkers said. “Then I remembered it was me. But I am so much smarter than this. I have a master’s degree!” She would try to have conversations, and simple words would not come. “I had to work to retrieve the words,” Oelkers explained. “I was terribly sad that I would not be returning to nursing school in January because I did not have the physical strength.”

Second Time Saved Her Life

Friends came to help, providing support, food, and more. Some days were terrible and others better. None were really good. Her daughter came to visit one day and noticed her incision was open. Her daughter, not knowing for sure what she was seeing, rushed Oelkers to Barrow Neurological Institute. It became the worst day yet, with the diagnosis of needing another brain surgery – the one thing she never wanted to go through again. At this point, Oelkers sunk to her lowest point. Would this ever be over, and would I ever become a nurse? It took a lot of prayers and support, but she pulled out of it, underwent surgery, and spent another week in the ICU. Then she had to start recovery all over again. But the second surgery became a blessing. She found out it stopped infection from setting in and saved her life.

Oelkers went home for recovery, left with some physical deformities that she wasn’t sure would ever go away. Her facial palsy was still there. “Eating was very messy,” Oelkers said. “I could not open my jaw very wide because they fixed part of my incision with my temporalis muscle.” Oelkers returned to her nursing studies online a little at a time. She started spending 15 minutes each day and worked her way up to several hours of online study.

When she felt ready, she resumed her in-person classes and clinicals. Ironically, her daughter, a 4th-year medical student at University Arizona Phoenix Medical School, was doing clinical rounds simultaneously as Oelkers. They have not run into each other yet, but it is entirely possible. Oelkers said about her and her daughter, “We have great conversations that could clear a room.”

She’ll be an RN – despite Covid-19

Life was back to as close to normal as possible, then Covid-19 hit, yet another obstacle. She finished her clinicals, went on Spring break, not to return. Colleges transitioned all classes to online learning, and clinicals were put on hold. But Oelkers stayed focused on persevering through it all as she had in the past. Each time she says to herself, “I think this is going to be the hardest thing ever, and I have to remember what I have already accomplished.”

The hardest part of Covid-19 for her has been understanding the public response to the pandemic. “What is most frustrating is when people think it is a hoax when doctors and nurses are working so hard to keep people alive,” Oelkers said. “If I can wear a mask to save a person’s life, I will wear a mask.”

When asked what her light bulb moments have been so far in her journey, Oelkers said, “How much harder it is than I ever thought it would be. I knew nurses worked hard, but I never realized how much they worked and cared.” She also expressed her admiration for nurses. “I am not a nurse yet. I will be very proud to be a nurse and have those letters,” Oelkers said. Furthermore, “It’s a very amazing profession to be able to help people. I have always loved the nurses that helped me through my journey, and I hope to be like them.”

Oelkers created a sign to encourage herself and placed it by her front door. It says, “Never be afraid of scars, it simply means that you were stronger than anything that tried to hurt you.” She looks at it for strength every time she leaves her house.

Oelkers remains optimistic about the future. She continues to stay on course and relies on her faith, mother’s inspiration, inner strength, family, and friends. She will graduate in December of this year with her BSN and RN. She says, “I chose to see the silver lining, the friendships I have made, and the relationships that have grown stronger because of it.”