

Mother and three daughters are a family of nurses

by Stella Shepard

Healthcare Sector

Nursing is a family career for **Muriel Steele** and her three daughters, **Charlotte, Christina** and **Elizabeth**.

All three sisters are in their first year at the **School of Nursing at UPEI**. The sisters never discussed enrolling in the program with their parents or with each other. While waiting for acceptance into the program, they were surprised to learn that each had made the same plan.

The three sisters sit together in classes, are lab partners, and they study together. They support each other and plan to graduate together. Their professors and classmates have nicknamed the young women “the three nursing sisters.”

Muriel's employment journey

Muriel and her husband **Gerard** raised three daughters and two sons. Muriel chose to fish with Gerard when the children were preschoolers. It was seasonal employment that allowed her to be home after the fishing season was over. When the youngest child started school, Muriel started thinking about full-time employment in healthcare.

“I witnessed the healthcare system personally when Elizabeth was hospitalized with meningitis when she was three,” says Muriel. “I thought, **WOW**, what a wonderful profession. It inspired me to consider a nursing career.

“Gerard encouraged and supported my decision. It had been 20 years since I had been in school, and studying was challenging. Gerard told me to do whatever I had to do to get through the Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) college program. He took care of our five children so I could study without distractions. I moved in with my parents that year, and Gerald was basically a single father during that time.

“I graduated from the LPN program in 1999. Since then, I've worked in the nursing field while increasing my skills to the highest level within the LPN designation. I enjoy learning, and I love what I do.”

Now Muriel's three daughters are following her into the healthcare field.

“I am very proud of my girls and I know that they will make awesome nurses,” says Muriel Steele.



Muriel Steele of Bear River has been working in the healthcare sector since graduating from an LPN program in 1999. Her three daughters (from left) Charlotte, Christina, and Elizabeth are in their first year at the School of Nursing at UPEI.

Charlotte, age 24

“I've had healthcare in the back of my mind since when I was seven and I watched my dad perform mouth-to-mouth artificial respiration on my sister Elizabeth,” says Charlotte. “When Elizabeth stopped breathing, I was terrified because I thought she was going to die. After watching dad save my sister, I knew that I wanted to help people too. The incident was a big part of my decision to become a nurse.

“I took the LPN course and have been working in the field since I graduated in 2006. But I want to do more. My dad, who has a degree in Biology, encouraged me to apply to UPEI.”

Future plans

“I am presently working in long-term care and community hospitals while studying,” says Charlotte. “Some day, I hope to do a Masters in healthcare and become a nurse practitioner or a teacher. I love the Island and I don't want to leave except to pursue more education.”

Christina, age 21

“I was inspired to become a nurse because my mom loves her job so much,” says Christina. “While in high school, I visited my mom where she worked at Community Mental Health and Addictions Centre. I'd see how happy she was at work, which also influenced my decision.”

“In grade nine, I took part in the **Take Our Kids to Work** program. My mom took the day off so we could tour her workplace at the manor and the hospital. Watching her interact with people in the workplace had an impact on my decision to become a nurse.

“Both my grandmothers were nurses. I also have aunts and cousins who are nurses. I knew since high school that I would follow in their foot steps. When Elizabeth was sick, I was taught never to waste time because you never know what tomorrow will bring. Right after high school, I enrolled at UPEI and got my electives before enrolling at the School of Nursing.”

Future plans

“I don't want to leave the Island to find employment because I love living here. But the reality is that I might have to leave for a while to pay off my student loan.”

Elizabeth, age 19

“I was inspired to become a nurse while I was a patient in the hospital,” says Elizabeth. “I was only three, but I can still remember the wonderful medical care and attention the nurses gave me.

“I applied to the School of Nursing after high school. There was a question on the application form about what inspired me to choose a career in nursing. I wrote about my encounter with one particular pediatric nurse named Libba, and how her care and attention inspired me.”

Future plans

“I also want to stay on the Island after graduation,” says Elizabeth. “I am considering working in public health for a couple of years before training to become a nurse practitioner.”

For more information about the School of Nursing at UPEI, visit www.upei.ca/nursing.

For more information about job opportunities in healthcare, visit www.gov.pe.ca and click on **Job Opportunities** and then on **Health Recruitment**.

Also visit www.employmentjourney.com click on **PEI Job Booklets** and scroll down to **Health Career Booklet**.