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Warrior for Life Returning Student Amy Ward

Sometimes in life people have the opportunity to meet or speak to someone who inspires them with their drive and perseverance. Amy Ward, a 2015 graduate of Lewis-Clark State College, is such a person.

Ward currently serves as a local nurse and epidemiologist. She has played a strategic role in Kootenai Health's response to past outbreaks, as well as the current COVID-19 pandemic. To prepare herself for this strategic health care role, she's had a remarkable journey of career changes and retooling her education with new skills.

Education has in many ways come naturally for Ward. With a mother having graduated from North Idaho College and a father worked who worked at NIC, Ward has always felt comfortable on college campuses.

Ward graduated from Lakeland High



Ward celebrating her LC State Alumna recognition



Ward in service as a COVID-19 Infectious Disease Manager at Kootenai Health

School in 2001. She eventually concurrently enrolled at North Idaho College and LC State Coeur d'Alene in 2004. Ward's initial plan was to enter into the NIC to LC nursing program, but instead she fell in love with microbiology. Between her experience at NIC and her fascination with microbiology, she decided to apply to the University of Idaho to complete her degree.

In 2006, with two years of college completed, Ward moved to Moscow, with her young daughter, Kallysta. As a single mother, she dedicated herself to an education in microbiology and preparing for her career.

Three years later, Ward graduated from U of I with her bachelor's degree in microbiology. Although she loved the field, she quickly realized the availability of jobs within microbiology were limited on her return to the Coeur d'Alene area. With that realization, Ward headed back to the classroom to pursue a career in nursing. During this time, she also met and married her husband, Kyle, in 2010.

In 2012, Ward graduated from North Idaho College with her associate degree in nursing and began working for Kootenai Health. Even with her busy work schedule and raising her daughter, Ward decided to go for a third degree, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at LC State CDA.

While working towards her BSN, she gave birth to her second daughter Emma. In 2015, Ward graduated from LC State, while also having the opportunity to work on the Ebola pandemic response team for Kootenai Health. Many of the practices and safety procedures put in place to manage Ebola were applied when COVID-19 began to show up in North Idaho.

Ward built a strong working relationship with epidemiologists at Panhandle Health District, which she grew through her Community Health coursework at LC State. These relationships were instrumental in her work as the Infection Control Department Coordinator of Kootenai Health, which she began in June 2014.

In addition to her three degrees, Ward decided to obtain a fourth degree, because she knew the additional education would benefit her work with her Infection Control position. At this same time, Ward gave birth to her third child, Peter. When the opportunity arose, despite three children and a busy schedule, Ward enrolled online at University of Providence. She decided the time was right for this new challenge.

Ward on Education
“Had I not had the educational background in nursing, microbiology, and epidemiology all of these pieces wouldn't have come together in a way that I can respond to a pandemic, help my community prevent the spread, and come out better for it. Just having those pieces to put together, there is no other way to attain those other than through education.”

“The Masters of Infection Control, it was an easy (choice) because it was the work I was doing, and so it really applied solely to what I was working on,” she said. “Kootenai was so supportive of all of my projects, and I worked it all seamlessly into things I was doing for work already. It was more of a work-study program for me because that was the work I was doing. Kootenai was amazing with their tuition reimbursement and their support of me in that program, so I would not have been able to do that without them.”

In 2019, Ward attained her fourth degree, a Master's of Science in Infection Control and Epidemiology. She has excelled in her career and in her educational goals.

When asked about how obtaining multiple degrees and attending LC State was the right decision for her, Ward replied, “I always believe everything happens for a reason. If I feel a strong pull towards something, then I feel it's the right thing to do. Even though I started at NIC and I was going to pursue nursing, I wouldn't have ended up at U of I, or LCSC if I hadn't started there and felt that passion for microbiology.”

Ward's passion for education, microbiology, and tackling infectious diseases is clear. In 2020, when COVID-19 struck the community she was pivotal in the fight against it.




Ward was chosen as the 2020 LCSC Alumna of the Year for the Coeur d'Alene campus. To which she shared, “It's so exciting. The work that I do I'm just passionate about it. To receive a recognition like that for doing what you like, what makes you feel good, and what you're good at is just so cool.”

The last year changed Ward and she made the difficult decision to leave Kootenai Health and begin working from home in the same field. Now her response to COVID-19 entails making sure that care facilities and hospitals caring for the elderly and vulnerable populations are properly equipped to deal with COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. It's challenging in a different way, but impactful just the same and all part of her journey.

“It's been a long journey, but it's put me in the position that I can really be happy with the work I'm doing and that I really can make a difference,” she said.

*Written by: Jenny Jeanette Duncan
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