



Dear Mrs. Roper,

Thank you for taking care of all the children in this school. Thank you for giving me my pills. Yours truly, Nathan

You are the best nurse because you help people when they get hurt. Thank you for helping evry body in the school. You are the best nurse. I know. From, Thomas

Thank you for your help. Have a good nurse day. You take care of your self. Love, Jenna

Have a good nurse day today. I wish you have a fun day. Thank you for all the things you did for me. You are very, very nice to children. Your friend, Tiffany

Thank you for curing me. I'm feeling better now. You are an A+ nurse. We all like you! Happy nurse teacher's day. Love, Jamie

Thank you Mrs. Roper for your kindness to other kids. To me you are a good nurse. Love, LeeRoy

You are a good nurse. I will help you when I get bigger. I will be a nurse just like you.

From, Casey

Thank you for helping all the kids in our school. You are a nice nurse. I am glad you to this school for a nurse. From, Shayna

Thank you for making me feel beter. I think you are a good nurse. Wen we had the eye test the glasis wer very btery. Love, Jared

Thank you for helping me when I brok my resk [wrist]. It was my riatting [writing] hand. That bubl felt funny. From, Max

You are a good nurse. I am glad that uor are a nurse. Mrs. Roper, you are the best. From, Ronald

Thank you for helping me. I like you as a school nurse. Have a Happy Teacher nurse day. From, Meghan

Thank you for helping me. You are nice I like you. You take care of peopl. From, Elizabeth

Reflections for School Nurse Day

Jeanne Dobson Roper, RN, SNT

After more than twenty years in school nursing, I find myself in the twilight of my career. Like most school nurses, I experienced “ups” and “downs,” but there was never a day that was dull. My school nursing career started by accident when I was called by my son’s school nurse on a day that he was ill at school. I was acquainted with the nurse because my older children had also attended school and she remembered that I was a registered nurse. After discussing my son’s condition, she asked me if I was working. At the time I was not, but I was ready to return to gainful employment. She suggested that I consider placing my name on the school district’s substitute nurse list and, as they say, the rest is history.

My previous nursing experiences included psychiatry, general medical-surgical nursing, spinal cord injury nursing, and home hemodialysis. I had never considered school nursing and assumed that, except for the schedule, it had little to offer. I also knew about the notoriously low salaries. But I was not really sure what direction I wanted to take, and substitute school nursing seemed like a good choice in the short term until I decided.

My first day of “subbing” was uneventful and I enjoyed interacting with the children. My second day was completely different. It began with snow, just enough to make roads slippery, but not enough to delay or close school. As I was signing in at the main office, I was asked, “Are you the nurse?” I answered affirmatively. “You’re needed out front. A girl is having a seizure on the sidewalk.” I quickly found my way to the student and discovered that the student had been struck by a car on the icy road and then had the seizure. I dealt with the situation at hand and about half an hour later, after the phone calls and the ambulance, I found my way to the nurse’s office.

While getting accustomed to the office and settling my nerves from the events just passed, I heard a peculiar but familiar sound. At first I wondered what it was and then I thought I recognized the sound, I thought it couldn’t be — not in a high school. I knew the sound so well from my years

on the spinal cord injury unit. The sound came closer until an electric wheelchair, carrying a young man, entered the office. In it was a 17-year-old boy, who was a senior and a quadriplegic. When he realized I was not the regular nurse, he exclaimed, “Oh, no! Isn’t Mrs. ‘V’ here?” I told him she was not but that I could help him because I had SCI experience. Reluctantly, he told me what he needed done prior to starting class. They were all tasks I had done many times before for my spinal cord patients in the rehabilitation hospital and I accomplished them quickly and properly, to his amazement. I managed to earn his trust and I made a friend. When he left for class, I wondered, “Why am I doing this for \$40 a day?”

We all have stories to tell and certainly I will not relate all of mine from the last 20+ years. But, my journey in school health has taken me places I never expected. My experiences as a substitute were so fulfilling that I decided I “had” to do this. My family supported my decision to return to school so that I could attain the credential I would need for the position I wanted, Certified School Nurse Teacher (SNT). I never dreamed on that second day of substituting that I would complete a Master’s degree or that I would eventually become the district’s Head School Nurse Teacher. Although none of this has been easy, it has always been exhilarating and often fun. No two days at school have ever been the same and I have never been bored.

Recently, I came upon a collection of letters (printed here) that were sent to me on School Nurse Day many years ago. They were written by a class of second grade students on white paper with solid red and dashed blue lines, in their very best printing, and with the best spelling and punctuation they knew at the time. They are a part of what makes practicing nursing in the school setting very special. 📖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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