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## Angie's Story: A Nurse's 35 Years at Children's

*Touched by words from Chief Nursing Executive Joyce Ramsey Coleman, veteran nurse **Angie Iannazzone** was inspired to write up her own history at Children's. With 35 years under her belt (and only a small break in service), Angie had some amazing memories to share.*

My adventure began in June 1978. Mary McFall, Nursing Director at the time, had a policy not to hire new nurses, but she took a chance on me. I hope that she had no regrets. I have worked in the Patient Care Area, the ER, the ICU, the NICU and the PACU; I've acted as House Supervisor; I'm now a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner with Anesthesia Services.

I remember the four-bed wards, our first neonate, and the nights with no pharmacy, no X-ray and emergent labs sent out by taxi. We played games late into the night with the patients and cooked cakes in the PICU oven. One of my favorite memories is speaking to one of the doctors about having our own ambulance service. At the time, he said my thinking was a bit "extravagant"; I reminded him of that conversation when Children's purchased not only our first ambulance but also our first helicopter! I have witnessed a fire and a serratia outbreak. I have seen the cessation of H-flu meningitis. I remember losing almost every patient with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and now the survival rate is 98 percent. I even performed CPR on a worker...a story for another day!

In the early days, the Emergency Room was simply a small exam room. At night, parents drove up to a door, actually rang a bell and were greeted by a nurse. We then knocked on the sleeping physician's door to wake him or her. I remember our first gunshot wound and our first craniotomy—actually performed in the ER!

I left Children's briefly, but when Cyndi Fowler and Joyce Ramsey Coleman called to tell me about a new surgery center, Meridian Mark, and asked me to be a part of it, I jumped at the chance. As I parked my car and walked into the hospital, it was like coming back home for me. The energy, the colors, the faces, and the children are engraved into my heart. I will always remember how I felt that day.

My professional career continued as I decided to return to school for an advanced nursing degree. For someone over 40, chemistry was a challenge, and I asked myself every single day if I could continue forward. I told the chemistry teacher that I would walk her dog, keep her children and clean her house if she could get me through organic and inorganic chemistry. She did and I endured, graduating and continuing my career at Children's.

I have worn another hat as a teacher of nursing students. I've always wanted to "pay it forward" and today, as I look around the campuses of Children's, I see so many of my students from Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and Georgia State University. I am so very proud to have been a part of their career choice.

The most difficult moment came this past year when my beautiful daughter called and said an ultrasound showed her 24-week-old baby girl had an atrial septal defect and a ventricular septal defect. The tears began to flow and would not stop. I knew the next call would be that Emily Kate had Down syndrome and indeed that call came.

Emily Kate entered the world in December 2012 and had cardiac surgery at Egleston this past spring. As I entered the unit, there were three of my former students. Talk about "paying it forward"! Every person supported my family with such compassion and professionalism. One former student even taught my daughter, Christie, how to place a nasogastric tube, a device used for feeding and administering medicine, exactly as she had been taught. There was never a single moment that we did not feel like we were the most important part of the staff's day!

My story—the friendships I have made, the students I have taught, the families that I have loved—are all a part of my career at Children's. I could write pages. Despite having a brief break in service, I will always consider my hire date as June 1978. The brief time away seems so small compared to the 35 years that I called Children's my home. I have been truly blessed.

*You can read more from Angie, and see some of the comments from her own friends and former students at the [Dedicated to All Better](#) blog.*

*Images: Angie poses with her granddaughter Emily Kate (top). Thirty-five years at Children's has meant a lot of dear friendships; Angie poses with Jean Griffin, Hannah Sparks and Gail Dewhurst (center). Angie's former student Faith Szink helped treat Emily Kate during her hospitalization (bottom).*



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