

A Change of Heart

Why Audra Tapperson replanted roots in Lubbock



Audra Tapperson cares for 15-year-old patient Cassidy.

When Audra Tapperson talks about her decision to go into the health care field, she likens it to going into the family business. Nurses, administrators and medical professionals mark her lineage, but it was a personal experience that ultimately led her into the world of home health.

“I had an accident when I was 16 years old, and I was told I wouldn’t walk again. It took two years, but I walked again,” Tapperson said. “It’s hard to find hope in certain situations, and I was determined to make an impact in the nursing field.”

Tapperson became a licensed vocational nurse (LVN) and was working toward becoming a registered nurse (RN) when her family felt a calling to leave Lubbock and move out-of-state to do ministry work. While in Virginia, Tapperson continued her work in health care, but found it to be very different from her Texas beginnings.

“The world of LVN doesn’t get as much honor there as it does in Texas,” she said. “It was very hard to request a certain amount of money for my skill. I was not considered a skilled nurse, and that was alarming when it came to my career. It was a very different experience than what I experienced in the Lubbock community.”

Because of this, Tapperson and her growing family replanted roots in Lubbock a short time later.

“The main goal was to go back to school,” she said. “We have very highly accredited schools here with the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, South Plains College and Covenant School of Nursing. I felt comfortable being back with some of the people that formed the foundations of nursing in me.”

Aside from familiarity, there were other factors that played into the Tapperson family’s decision to return to Lubbock.

“The cost of living on the East Coast is probably twice what it is here, and the income for a middle-class family is not sufficient without two jobs,” Tapperson said. “I also drove 55 minutes to work one way, every day, five days a week. It did get taxing. For the cost of living and the pay, Lubbock is a very comfortable place to live.”

Tapperson now works as a private duty nurse for BrightStar Care, taking care of a 15-year-old patient, Cassidy, and going to school with her each day.

“It’s my goal to give her the best experience she can have when she’s with me,” Tapperson said. “We have a one-stop shop at BrightStar. We have a whole team that coordinates with your home for optimal care. There’s a certain tone, a sign and the look on a patient’s face when you know you’ve gotten it just perfect. I get to be a part of that.”

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Audra Tapperson visits with co-worker Charlene Hack at the BrightStar Care office.

“In Lubbock, you can truly work in just about every area of nursing you can think of.”

Easily navigated and boasting an average commute time of just 17 minutes, from a logistics standpoint, Lubbock is ideal for home health care.

“Practically, the homes are easy to find,” Tapperson said. “And Lubbock has completed some of the highways they were working on when we left. You start having this feeling of ‘I’m here in the city.’ It’s incredible what’s happened here.”

Aside from the growth within the Lubbock community, the city’s low cost of living is something that Adrienne Cozart, senior vice president of human resources at University Medical Center Health System, touts to prospective employees.

“If you want a great place to live and place to raise your kids, come to Lubbock,” Cozart said. “It’s not a metropolitan city, but it offers a lot of the same amenities as a large city. It has a low cost of living, a family friendly community and opportunities for all age groups.”

Perhaps that’s why more and more Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center alumni and former Lubbock residents are finding that it’s the right time to give Lubbock another look.

“With top-rated schools, more house for your dollar, great restaurants, a growing art scene and a variety of entertainment options, Lubbock has become one of the top cities for opportunities according to Forbes,” said John Osborne, president and CEO of the Lubbock Economic Development Alliance (LEDA).

One area of particular opportunity is in the health care field.

“The wages are very competitive,” said Lonny Kane, owner of BrightStar Care. “For the cost of living here, the wages are very good and a nurse can live comfortably. Yes, we have several nursing schools in this area, but as with the rest of the country, we still have a need for nurses. In Lubbock, you can truly work in just about every area of nursing you can think of.”

And to make it easier for professionals to discover available positions, LEDA has stepped in to act as a conduit between job seekers and businesses.

“One way we’re doing this is through a web portal—return2lbk.org—that serves as a one-stop shop featuring concentrated, valuable job openings,” said Christine Allen, director of workforce development for LEDA.

Not only does LEDA provide information and links to a large number of health care-focused openings, they also provide links to other jobs available in the Lubbock community.

“Fortune.com recently listed Lubbock as one of the top 10 cities to find a job,” Osborne said. “In the six years that my wife, Sunni, and I have lived in Lubbock, we’ve come across so many wonderful people who moved back because they wanted not only to find a good job, but a good community. That’s why we’re in Lubbock.”

As for the Tappersons, they have no plans to leave any time soon.

“For me it’s just that feeling of being home,” she said. “I understand the regulations, and I connect with the company. Lubbock isn’t like you remember it if you’ve been gone for a while. It hasn’t lost that home feeling, but it’s gotten a facelift.”

For more available health care positions and other employment opportunities in Lubbock, please visit www.return2lbk.org or call 800.687.5330.



The Tapperson family enjoys dining at a local restaurant.