

**Please provide your biographical information (major/minor at WCU, town you grew up in, reason why you came to WCU).**

My name is Emily Ireland. I'm from Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey which is all the way south about 10 minutes from the beach! I came to WCU because, besides the amazing nursing program, it was the first college campus that I stepped on and said, "Wow. I could really see myself as part of this community."

**What made you go into degree?**

I have been a Type 1 diabetic since I was 12 years old as well as suffered from Hashimoto's hypothyroidism, another autoimmune disease, since I was 6. So, I've seen quite a lot of medical professionals over the years. My diabetes nurse from the age of 12-22 was Tara Dea. She was there for the good, the bad, and the ugly through those 10 years. She always told me, "Don't ever let your diabetes get in your way. You can do anything. I wanted to be someone else's "Tara" someday.

**What is your official title and what are your responsibilities in your current position?**

My official title is Emily Ireland BSN, RN. I work on the Neuroscience/Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, PA. I have also been trained as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE).

**What is a typical day like at work?**

Never a dull moment, that is for sure! I work nightshift which is 7p-730a. Don't ask me why, but the crazy stuff always happens at night!

**What have been the biggest challenges at work?**

I think the biggest challenge of being a nurse is being able to check yourself for unconscious bias or really reflecting on your own beliefs. Many times, nurses need to respect the wishes of patients and families, even it goes against what that nurse may believe is medically or ethically the best choice for the patient. During this COVID pandemic, another huge challenge has been the overwhelming amount of grief that the staff has to face. We are the ones holding the hands of the dying while their loved ones have to say goodbye over the phone or Facetime because they cannot come in to say goodbye. We are constantly having the same difficult phone calls shift after shift. It has been a struggle, and our hearts break for both patients and families alike.

**What do you enjoy most about your current position?**

I love my ICU family. I have been so lucky to work with such an amazing group of humans. I battled thyroid cancer this past year, and I couldn't have gotten through it without them. From sending me food while I was isolated for radiation treatment, to donating their own paid time off so I could have more time to recover. I am forever grateful. Hey, saving lives is pretty cool too!

### **What skills, talents, and other traits are useful and necessary to do your job?**

You have to have a huge sense of humor, a thick skin, and strong stomach!

### **Do you have a favorite or funny story about work?**

I won't tell patient stories because of HIPPA and all that jazz... But one time I almost got pulled down the laundry shoot because the bag full of linens hooked my stethoscope... It was so heavy it actually pulled my feet off the ground. I screamed like a baby!

### **What do you enjoy doing in your free time?**

I love reading, being outside, and playing with my weenie dog!

### **Where do you see yourself in five years?**

In 5 years, I hope to be working on LifeFlight as a nurse!

### **What advice would you give to a current student who aspires to follow in your footsteps and pursue a similar career path?**

Nursing is HARD. There will be days where you doubt every choice you have ever made. You will have days where you want to quit. But I'm telling you, the day does come where you see that PASS on the NCLEX. It is a marathon, not a race. You can't compare your journey to that of those around you. I promise, when you feel for the first time that you truly made a difference in someone's life or even their day, it will make it all worth it. KEEP GOING. And take care of yourself. 8 hours of sleep will not always be possible in nursing school, but drink water. Eat as best as you can. Take time for yourself that has nothing to do with your schoolwork. Self-care is so important. You can't take care of others to the best of your ability unless you take care of yourself.

### **How has your WCU education contributed to your success?**

West Chester Nursing (Class of 2017 wootwoot!) gave me the education and the tools to enter the nursing world with confidence. Our simulation labs gave us the opportunity to practice many hands on skills and the ability to work through emergency situations in a controlled environment. It truly made all the difference.

### **What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments (both personally and professionally)?**

My greatest accomplishment professionally has certainly been becoming a nurse and landing the job that I have. I really do love going to work. I love learning new things every single day. I love putting the puzzle pieces together to help a patient. It is awesome. As for my greatest personal accomplishment, it would have to be beating cancer's butt!

### **What's your favorite memory from when you were a student at WCU?**

**Emily Ireland '17**



WCU and the surrounding area is beautiful. My favorites memories are from all of the drives we would take in my roommate Jenna's Chrysler Sebring convertible named "Margaret".