

50+ Living our best lives now and in the future!

Courage to Follow Her Calling

At 40, she became a licensed massage therapist. At 53, she became a registered nurse. Like many other adults who made later life career changes, Tanya Russell understood many of her challenges, including self-doubts, but also believed she was following her calling. Today, she is fulfilling her dream as a surgical center pre-op nurse.



A Pathway into the Healthcare Field

Before becoming a licensed massage therapist, Russell worked nearly four years “as a chiropractic assistant physiotherapist under his license.” She then completed 625 hours of massage therapy training from an accredited, Board-approved school to complete her license and then passed state and national examinations. “I yearned to work in the healthcare field from a very early age, and this job opportunity felt like an open door to that world of patient care.”

An Opportunity

“It wasn't until my stepfather was dying from cancer and witnessing firsthand the love and compassion that was shown to our family by a hospice caregiver that I knew exactly what I was meant to do. Her skills and compassion opened my eyes to the amazing gift a nursing career could offer to many people in need. This experience sparked a passion that lay dormant inside of me. I wanted to have an impact on others the way that that caregiver did on us.”

For eight years, Russell worked as a medical assistant for a local doctor and “loved it.” But she had “continual reminders that she wasn't a registered nurse.” At forty-nine, she wondered if it was too late for her to become a registered nurse. However, a retired nurse and a nurse practitioner encouraged her to apply for an upcoming scholarship. When Russell started her nursing program, she was 49 years old.

Lots of Challenges

“My main concerns were my age and lack of education. I was also worried about being quick enough at learning to keep up or catch on. I had no computer skills and would be attending school with

tech-savvy kids who are used to noise and multitasking. I have test anxiety. The more pressure I feel, the stupider I get. I had been told that I read at a 6th-grade level. I knew how much material I would be expected to read and understand.”

Russell noted that dealing with college admissions and learning new technical skills were also challenging. She recalls “jumping through hoops in admissions to get everything rolling.” Then there was the technology, online registration, and navigating websites, which were challenging and frustrating.

Self-Discovery

“I am smarter than I ever gave myself credit for; I am my biggest challenge. I never gave up when each difficult subject was like a foreign language; I thought I could never understand it.” Yet, the material “began to click in my brain from repetition and perseverance. It felt miraculous.”

Serving with Love and Compassion

Russell graduated and attained her RN license in 2021 at 53. She then began working at the Oregon Surgery Center and has been working there for three years, loving each day. “The best part of working in healthcare is the variety of patients I get to show love and compassion to in a time of need.”



Russell’s patients often need more than her professional skills. They need extra reassurance. “Scared patients may be emotional and need reassurance that they are in the right place with a healthcare team that is there for them and going to be with them from the beginning to the time they go home. The patients who are rude, unfriendly, or mean are probably suffering from some form of fear or past trauma/experiences. I have discovered that it

is hard not to take a patient's behavior personally, but our skill and experience as nurses have taught us ways to treat everyone with love and compassion despite their treatment of us. It’s more of a challenge some days than others.”

For Fun and Relaxation

“My husband and I like hiking, kayaking,



snorkeling, and riding dirt bikes and 4-wheelers. I also like to garden, sew, craft, bake, and make sourdough bread, wine, salsa, and jam.”

For relaxation, “I love to find a good Hallmark movie on TV or watch a crime or medical series to escape whenever possible.”

Advice for Others

“I would advise someone considering going back to school or changing careers ‘just to do’ it when they feel they are no longer living a strong life. We can always find reasons to stay where we are. Change is hard, and it requires effort. It is hard at first, but once you get the wheels moving, it gets easier, and before you know it, you've completed it as no time has passed. My doctor mentor told me something I wished someone had told me years earlier; ‘Time passes whether you are accomplishing something or not.’”

Russell learned some valuable insights through her experiences. “Returning to school at my age taught me that when things seem impossible, do them anyway. Put one foot in front of the other and take things one step at a time. Don't look at the long road ahead; focus on one step at a time.”



Serving, Caring & Making a Difference

“At the end of the day, it's not about what you have or even what you've accomplished. It's about what you've done with those accomplishments. It's about who you've lifted and who you've made better. It's about what you've given back.” *Denzel Washington*

A Focus on Service and Giving to Others

Michael David Avery, featured in the November 2024 [newsletter](#), wrote the lyrics and created this particularly touching “One Kind Thought” [video](#).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3nUb84-Gk4>

“My brother [Gordon] gives 50 bikes away each Christmas to underprivileged kids. He inspired the song and the image of the surprised kid on the bike.”

Gordon Avery, featured in the June 2024 [newsletter](#), has been providing bikes to underprivileged families in his community for six years. Rather than stopping at writing a check to purchase the bikes, he also finds ways to bring the community together. He works in partnership with the Roseburg, Oregon, Fred Meyer store, which provides the bikes,



assembles them, and arranges discounts. He also coordinates with the Sutherlin, Oregon Fire Department, which picks up the bikes and delivers them to families so parents can give their children the bikes. Some of



Gordon's friends also help with the effort by helping load and deliver the bikes or writing a check to support the project. Gordon's son, Noah, has also been involved in this project. What has become an annual event is truly a community celebration.

Gordon Avery also supports and creates a similar event around Thanksgiving by providing turkeys and is finding other ways to help his community and bring people together. Gordon and Michael Avery are planning for a nonprofit, One Kind Thought, to further support the community's needs and bring even more people together.

Kindness

“Find the good in everybody.”

Pass It On.com. The Foundation for a Better Life.

Here's to Your Health and a Little Chocolate, too!

If you are health-conscious, you may be looking for ways to avoid too many extra treats this season, including chocolate. The good news is that a specific type of chocolate can be delicious and healthy, too!

Chocolate Type and Type 2 Diabetes

Harvard researchers specializing in metabolic health studied chocolate consumption in over 18,000 people. Their findings, reported in the [British Medical Journal](#), suggest that eating five or more

servings of unsweetened 100% cacao dark chocolate per week was associated with a 21% lower risk of diabetes because of flavanol content. Dark chocolate with high amounts of cacao “is among foods with the highest amounts of flavanol.” Milk chocolate, on the other hand, provided no metabolic benefits and was associated with increased weight gain.

Flavanol and Potentially Improved Cardiovascular Health

According to a [report](#) in the US Cardiology Review, cocoa flavanols “have demonstrated the potential to modulate cardiovascular health” by reducing platelet aggregation. Decreasing this aggregation may “provide a dietary approach to reducing blood clot formation.”

Recipe for Delicious, Healthy, Fudge



This fast and easy recipe takes about 15 minutes to prepare and tastes rich and creamy.

Ingredients:

- 1 large ripe avocado
- ½ cup natural peanut butter (with no added sugars)
- 2-3 tbsp coconut oil
- ½ cup sugar-free dark chocolate chips
- ¼ cup unsweetened special dark 100 cacao powder
- 3-4 tbsp monk fruit or stevia
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Pinch of sea salt
- Chopped almonds for topping.

Instructions:

1. Using a food processor or an immersion blender, blend the peeled avocado flesh,

- peanut butter, cocoa powder, sweetener, vanilla extract, and salt until smooth.
2. Melt the coconut oil and chocolate chips in the microwave.
3. Blend the melted coconut oil and chocolate chips into the fudge mixture until smooth.
4. Line an approximately 7 x 9” container with parchment paper.
5. Spread the fudge onto the parchment paper.
6. If desired, chop some almonds and spread on top.
7. Refrigerate for up to five days.

After refrigerating, the fudge should be firm within about 90 minutes. Enjoy!

Remembering Those Who Showed Compassion and Kindness

Can you recall someone who showed unexpected compassion or kindness when you needed it most? If so, consider honoring that gift of love with a commemorative brick installed above the historic



Oregon City Elevator at the end of the Oregon Trail.

A 4” x 8” brick costs \$100, and an 8” x 8” brick costs \$300. For more information, click [here](#).

Note: Purchases should be made before the end of this year, as the installation process is expected to begin early in 2025. While it may still be possible to purchase bricks, later, the cost of bricks and installation is expected to increase.

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However you choose to celebrate the holiday season, find the joy and pass it on!