

	<b>Veterans Affairs Learning Opportunities Residency (VALOR) Program For Nursing</b>	
<b>Brooklyn Campus</b>	<b>Summer 2012</b>	<b>NY Campus</b>

Since early 1900s, the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System (NYHHS) has been approved as one of the sites to offer the VALOR Program. The VALOR program is an exciting, summer clinical residency for BSN nursing students between their junior and senior years. It is designed to increase participant's clinical skills, clinical judgment and critical thinking while caring for our Veterans. One to one preceptor relationship with the student helps the VALOR Students build confidence in their nursing skills. The VALOR Students have a unique opportunity to connect with the VA NYHHS and assess the feasibility of employment after graduation.

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW:**

- Ten- weeks paid summer program, from June 3 – August 13, 2012.
- The VALOR program student is appointed under 38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1)(D) at a per annum training rate equal to 80% of the actual salary rate in effect on February 1, 2008 for Nurse I, Level I Step 1 at the facility.
- As new employees, the VALOR Students attend a day of HR Orientation at Brooklyn Campus and four days Service Specific Orientation at the Manhattan Campus and CPRS computer and BCMA training at their designated campus.
- Clinical assignments are available in a variety of specialties: acute medical surgical units, critical care, emergency department, operating room, post-anesthesia care unit, primary care clinic, community based out-patient clinic, home based primary care and mental health units.
- VALOR Students work 40 hours per week during the summer program which includes clinical practice with an RN/Preceptor along with other planned educational experiences.
- The students will complete a total of 400 hours during the VALOR Summer Program.

**PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY:**

- Currently enrolled in an NLN accredited BSN program.
- Have a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, with no grade lower than a B in any nursing course.
- Have completed the final semester or quarter of their junior year.
- Have had at least one clinical experience in a medical center or hospital.
- Be a U.S. citizen and meet physical examination standards at the time of entry.

- Provide documentation of current immunization status and Basic Life Support at the Healthcare Provider Level.
- Be able to complete 400 consecutive hours (10 weeks) as a VALOR Student during the summer months.
- Complete the application process and submit all materials by the application deadline.



**(Left side)** L to R: Front: Lauren Schlesinger 2012 VALOR, NY, Leonila Navarro-Mariazeta RN, MSN, PSE, NY, Michael Cruz RN, 2011 VALOR, NY, Cynthia Caroselli PhD, Associate Director for Patient Services, Daniel Clark RN, 2009 VALOR, NY, Kathryn Baludio 2012 VALOR NY, Samantha Narciso 2012 VALOR BK,

**(Right Side)** L to R: Jeremy Butler 2012 VALOR NY, Angeli Medina RN, BSN, MPA, VALOR Coordinator NY, (Not in Picture Sandy Raziano RN, MSN, VALOR Coordinator, BK, Britta Lago RN, Resource Manager & Caroline Donahue RN, Nurse Recruiter, BK) Raphael Buyo 2012 VALOR, BK, Olesya Malyavchuk 2012 VALOR, BK, Joyce M. Jones RN, MSN, PSE, Alla Portnoy RN, MSN, PSE

## 2012 VALOR STUDENTS



**Kathryn Baludio, New York Campus**

Being in a family full of medical professionals, I fought my calling to the field of medicine for years. However, with time, I recognized that I had a strong desire to serve people, to work with my hands, and quite simply, to “stay busy”. Being the product of two nurses, I firmly believe that I have been born and bred to be a nurse. My family has shown me the importance of having patience, a nurturing and caring disposition towards others, and perhaps most importantly, the usefulness of having a “thick skin”. It has been a combination of both their efforts and my own that have afforded me the opportunity of a nursing education at the York College Nursing Program.

My short term goals include successful completion of the VALOR Program, while absorbing as much information and gaining as much hands on experience as possible, as well as leaving a lasting impression on each Veteran I encounter. My long term goals include graduating from the York College Nursing Program and passing my NCLEX upon taking it my first time. I hope to also continue my education by pursuing a Masters’ degree to become a Clinical Nurse Leader, which would allow me to stay close to the bedside. The need for excitement and the desire to stay busy has led me to the decision to focus on Emergency Care Nursing. A clinical instructor once told me, “The E.R. is a crazy place, but there is something addicting about it”, and even after one day of E.R. rotation, I admit to being drawn to its fast paced environment.

I chose to apply to the VALOR Program for a of couple reasons. Firstly, my first clinical rotation was at the VA St. Albans Extending Living Facility, where I provided care for Veterans and was amazed at the humility and appreciation they exhibited at any simple task I had done. From then on, I promised to treat and uphold each Veteran I encountered to the highest standard of care I could provide and the VALOR Program internship would provide me that opportunity. Lastly, from personal experiences, the VA is also very technologically advanced in comparison to other health care facilities and I

hope that by interning in the VALOR Program, the exposure would help me gain the very best experience possible.

As newly elected Vice President of my school's Nursing Club, much of my free time is spent planning the upcoming year's events. I also attend a Cycling class weekly, and enjoy spending time with family, friends, and being outdoors with my four dogs. A "secret" hobby of mine also includes rescuing stray dogs, as I have successfully rescued four stray dogs from the streets and placed them into new loving homes.



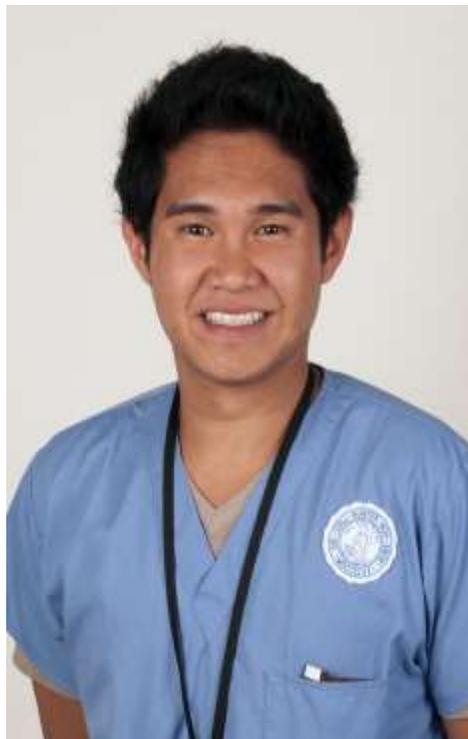
**Jeremy Butler, New York Campus**

A professor once jokingly told our class the story of the role assignment of medicine. He said: "when the medical profession was started and the roles were being handed out each profession claimed its stake. When diseases and pathophysiological conditions were up for grabs the doctors said 'we'll have those.' When issues of mental health were to doled out psychiatrist and psychologists spoke up. And when all blood, urine, feces, vomit, sputum, and anything else that could seep, ooze, or otherwise secrete from the body were on the table, that's when the nurses said 'that's us!'" Of course he meant this comically but there is an underlying message to this story that holds very true. The nurse will do whatever is necessary, despite how uncomfortable or undesirable the task, to make his or her patient well. What it is saying is that nurses care above and beyond themselves and as a profession we serve something more important than ego or pride. It is truly caring for and the betterment of our patients that drives us; to us little else matters.

My Aunt died of cancer, she was in her forties and left behind a husband and three children. I used to visit her in the hospital with my father. Eventually the doctors accepted that her time was coming and released her to be at home, surrounded by her loved ones. A private palliative care nurse was hired to come help my Aunt through this

final transition. Up until this point my image of a nurse had been a woman in a white uniform handing out medications and checking to make sure the patients were in their beds. This woman who was helping my aunt changed my perception of what a nurse could be and inspired me, although not right away, to pursue the career that I am on the path towards today. I watched her not only care for my Aunt's physical needs, and not only her emotional needs, but for the needs of the entire family. What she knew, and I came to realize, is that in such situations there is not one, but a group of patients. What I learned from her is that a nurse is someone who cares about and takes action towards the holistic betterment of everyone affected by illness, trauma, or emotional distress.

The next step on the path that led me towards nursing was in taken in the uniform of a U.S. soldier. I was a Health Care Specialist, or as we prefer to be called, a combat medic. This position allowed for a vast array of medical experience. One could do anything from in-the-field paramedic type work to operating room duties, from walk in clinic to flight medic. I was fortunate enough to experience most of these roles and through these experiences find where my strengths and preferences lay. I discovered that patient hold was where I shined. Patient hold is the name given to the long term treatment area. It was here that I found out that I had a knack for creating rapport with and thereby inspiring compliance in my patients. This was true to such a degree that our physical therapist used to request that I accompany certain patients to their session as he found them more willing to push themselves if they believed it was what I wanted for them. I cannot deny that I did feel a certain amount of pride in this and a thankfulness that I had finally found my place in this world. I would be a nurse.



**Raphael Buyo, Brooklyn Campus**

Not everyone can say that they have found their passion in life. Many people live each day working jobs that help to financially maintain their physiological, psychological, and social well-being without having the fervor to help keep their occupations interesting and enjoyable. For myself, I am fortunate and blessed in my life to have found two passions: music and nursing. Both take time to learn, and both take time to appreciate; however, in the end, when techniques and skills have been long mastered, *passion* takes over to help keep the drive and desire alive to continue the love for these interests.

For the summer of 2012, I am fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work as a VALOR extern at the Brooklyn VA Hospital. With this externship, I plan on fine-tuning my clinical abilities, and most importantly, I plan on improving my therapeutic communication skills. Personally, it is of the utmost importance to communicate effectively and concisely, especially when dealing with information regarding a patient. When miscommunication occurs, mistakes may occur, putting the patient in harm's way. I also look forward to working in a team of not only nurses but of social workers, doctors, non-clinical hospital staff, and other VALOR externs.

When considering my long-term goals, the thought of pursuing a Master's Degree in Sociology of Health and Illness always is the first thing that comes to mind. Nursing approaches health and illness in a holistic manner, and among the physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects, the one that interests me the most is the sociological. Society plays such a strong role in determining health outcomes for many people of different races and economic statuses, and I want to study the causes and effects of these relationships.

Thank you for this wonderful and unique opportunity to work as a VALOR extern. I will take all of my experience and knowledge with me to this summer externship, and I hope to leave as a more able student nurse. Eventually with that, I hope to successfully transition from being a competent student nurse to a competent, confident, and proud registered nurse.



**Olesya Malyavchuk, Brooklyn Campus**

“The trained nurse has become one of the great blessings of humanity, taking a place beside the physician and the priest.” This quote from Canadian physician William Osler captures for me both the scientific/clinical and the spiritual/nurturing aspects of nursing, and both aspects of a nurse’s job appeal to me. I am very proud to be a nursing student at Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing. The VALOR program at the VA is my first “real world” opportunity to prove and enhance my nursing skills, and I am thrilled to have been selected for this exclusive program. I will try my best to gain as much experience as possible and to give to patients the highest quality care I can.

The opportunity to work at a Veterans Administration facility holds special meaning for me as a relatively new citizen of the United States. (I became a US citizen last spring.) I look forward to caring for my new country’s veterans, and consider it a great honor. I hope to say “thank you” to those who have been willing to fight for and defend this great nation, and also to provide them excellent care.

My previous work experience in childcare, eldercare and customer service has developed skills directly relevant to nursing – teamwork, empathy, patience and dedication. Clinical rotations have enhanced my basic nursing skills, and have made me more confident and passionate. Moreover, my knowledge of Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and German will facilitate my care of patients who speak foreign languages.

My short term goals are to improve my nursing skills in clinical settings; to learn to enhance my patients’ care, safety, and satisfaction; to apply what I have learned in the classroom to the hospital room and to live situations. In the future, I hope to become an expert Registered Nurse and to advance my nursing education further. I am eager to work

in any clinical area, although medical-surgical units, in my opinion, expose a novice nurse to the greatest variety of patient care experiences and probably are most appealing to me.

Thank you again for choosing me for the VALOR program and for giving me this tremendous opportunity. As Clara Barton said, “I may be compelled to face danger, but never fear it, and while our soldiers can stand and fight, I can stand and feed and nurse them.”



**Samantha Narciso, Brooklyn Campus**

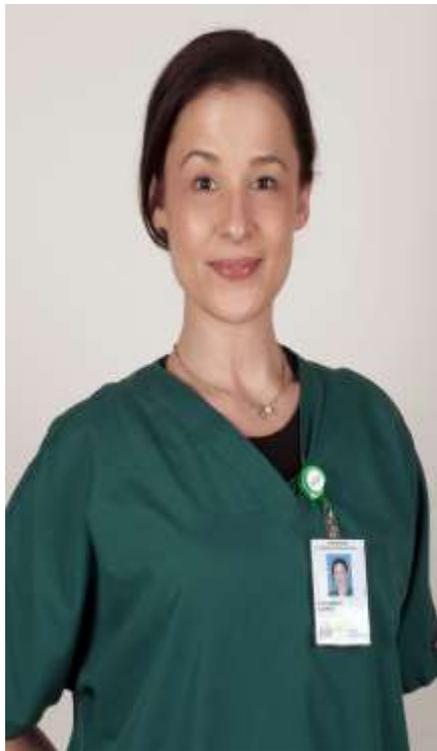
I am presently a student enrolled in the Wagner College Bachelor School of Nursing. I am honored to be an accepted VALOR where I can best utilize my skills while contributing to the health services of the VA. Personally, I want to become a nurse, foremost, because of the satisfaction I get from knowing I can make a difference each and every day. I am very compassionate, down to earth, enthusiastic and sensitive to the needs of others. The qualities that I possess are essential and enable me to work in the medical environment. I have always been interested in the medical field and the fact that I can learn to save lives and help people only strengthens my decision to be a part of this field.

The VALOR program is the right choice for me because of its valued requirements. This program surpasses the rest. It means so much to me to be accepted into a program with a hospital that's popularity and trustworthiness is known near and

far. During my externship I will contribute to your hospital by applying my skills under the supervision of my seniors. My long term goal is to gain invaluable, first-hand experience that will enable me to secure a position in a nursing career.

This past semester I truly valued my clinical experience on the Vent Unit floor. However, I do not have a specific area in which I want to exercise my skill. I am looking forward to learning different practices and expanding my nursing knowledge.

Besides the hard working hours towards my degree, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and have a deep passion for basketball. The physicality and quick pace of the game energizes me. In my spare time I also coach a 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys' basketball team. Additionally, I enjoy donating my time to working with autistic children. The time I spend with them is very gratifying. Once again, I would like to thank the VALOR program for this rewarding opportunity and I am extremely enthusiastic to begin.



**Lauren Schlesinger, New York Campus**

I am currently a student at Binghamton University's Decker School of Nursing. It was with great interest that I learned about the Veterans Administration Learning Organization Residency (VALOR) program, while researching world renowned medical teaching facilities that utilize computerized charting. I am honored to have been accepted into this program and look forward to this incredible learning opportunity.

Presently, my clinical interests are in critical care and medical surgery. It is for these reasons that the VALOR program holds such interest to me. Not only does this externship uphold core values of commitment, compassion, and excellence, it will also allow me to serve those who have served our country. I am eager to have the opportunity

to work with this population, as it has always been an area of interest for me and a field I would like to further pursue.

My short term goals, during my externship, is to learn as much as I can from my preceptor and the interdisciplinary healthcare teams I work with. I hope to expand my clinical skills, critical thinking, and nursing proficiency, through hands on experience in this clinical setting.

These short term goals, along with my long term goal, which is to expand my knowledge, awareness and sensitivity, will educate and help me provide the best up to date medical care to my patients. I know myself well and recognize that I possess the attributes necessary for a successful career in nursing. Many of these innate qualities cannot be taught: compassion, warmth, kindness, empathy, and a desire to help others. I am grateful and excited to be a part of the VALOR program and would like to thank the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System for this great honor and privilege. For me, this is a lifetime opportunity that will enhance my nursing education while helping me work towards my professional goal, to be the best nurse that I can be.

### **VALOR PROJECT**

As part of the VALOR experience, students work independently to research and propose a plan of action concerning an activity, procedure or challenge posed on the unit to which the students are assigned. Project conclusions are developed via research papers and posters and supported by nursing literature and evidence based practice. VALOR Students then present their findings to nursing leadership and other staff during the VALOR recognition at the end of the summer.

**Acknowledgement: Photographs done by Lamel J. Hinton, Photographer, Medical Media**



**Congratulations to all the 2011 VALOR Nursing participants who recently graduated!!!**

**Kudos to the 2010 VALORs who passed the New York State Nursing Board Exams!!!**



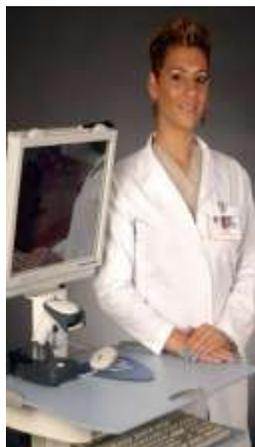
**Former VA NYHHS VALORs who are currently working at the NYHHS as Staff Nurses**



**Danielle Battinelli RN  
17 North, NY Campus**



**Daniel Clark RN  
4West, NY Campus**



**Elda Koci RN  
Brooklyn Campus**



**Francis Li RN  
Brooklyn Campus**



**Simone Hamilton RN  
8 North, NY Campus**



**Natasha Singh RN  
4 West, NY Campus**



**Cristina Shock RN  
4 South, NY Campus**



**Perry Yao RN  
Brooklyn Campus**



**Michael Cruz RN, 2010 VALOR**

My name is Michael A. Cruz and was a VALOR student in the SICU in 2010. After having had my summer long internship at the NYHHS, I have graduated from Binghamton University and received my BSN in Nursing soon followed by passing my NCLEX exam August of 2011. I am currently hired as a full time nurse on 4 West Surgical/Telemetry Unit and not only has it been extremely rewarding to be back at the VA but, I feel like I was right at home and have found myself very blessed to be working for the VA again. I have been welcomed to the NYHHS with open arms and I wouldn't rather have started my nursing career any other way.



**Eleni Parrisis RN, 2008 VALOR**

I was very fortunate to be a part of the 2008 Valor Program, with wonderful mentors and preceptors who showed me what nursing was truly about. During my time at the VA, I was able to participate in critical care areas such as the surgical and medical intensive care units, and the recovery room. It was here that I was able to experience true hands on experiences with patients, and witness aspects of nursing I did not even know existed. It was these special nurses who took the time to teach and guide me to be the nurse I now am today.

I am currently a staff RN on 4 South, a 28 bed medical unit. I work with a very encouraging and supportive staff that is always there to lend a hand and work like a team. It is this quality of the VA that always reminds me of why I wanted to become a part of it in the first place.

Beginning this fall, I am entering the Hunter Bellevue School of Nursing, in conjunction with Baruch College, as a graduate student in pursuit of both my Masters Degrees in Nursing Administration and Public Administration. I am eager to begin and believe that this education will empower me to positively impact nursing as a whole within the VA healthcare system.

I am truly honored to be able to have had the opportunities the VA has provided me with, and even more so to be able to give back quality care to our veterans.



**Daniel Clark RN, 2009 VALOR**

I've been working on the 4W surgical telemetry/stepdown unit since I graduated from the College of Mount Saint Vincent. I've had the opportunity to take a critical care certification course this year and look forward to moving into critical care in the near future.