

QS Nurses

Celebrating 25 Years in Kansas

When Kyle Whitlow's dad looked at a map of Kansas, he was drawn to Great Bend's central location. The next thing the family knew, QS Nurses established a home base here in town.

"Dad noticed that all roads lead to Great Bend," said Whitlow, operations officer at the staffing agency. "He thought, what better way to serve rural healthcare facilities and nurses than being smack dab in the middle of the state.

"Dad grew up on a farm in Montana but moved to Metropolitan Colorado in 1983 to achieve his dream of helping nurses," Whitlow said. "Over time, he desired to reconnect with his rural roots so Kansas made sense."

For 25 years, the first and only QS Nurses office has been located in Great Bend. Its first location was on Washington near Thill Printing and is now at 1701 Williams where an 8-person team, including Whitlow, staffs the local office. The business recently moved here after renovating the space.

QS (Quality Staffing) Nurses hires registered and licensed practical nurses, along with nurse aides and medication aides.

"The name of the game is serving," Whitlow commented. "Some nurses only want to work one day a month and others might desire long-term contract work. They can design their work schedules around their personal lives. Our job is to help them achieve their goals, both personal and professional.

"Being an agency nurse is an adventure because new things happen all the time. New town, new facility, new patients, new team members so it can be quite fun."

Only 3 out of 10 nurses who apply are accepted at QS "because of our strict criteria," Whitlow noted. "We look for professionalism, reliability and dependability. And they must be team players."

"We have earned our clients' trust because we are there when needed most. There are many big outfits across the country but we work solely with Kansas facilities and Kansas nurses."

QS nurses has served in practically every facility in Barton County over the years. "Actually, you name a county west of Topeka, we are probably in it or have been at some point. We serve around 100 facilities ranging from critical access hospitals to small assisted- living facilities.

The goal is to keep their staff from driving more than 60 miles one way so they can return home after every shift. However, some may want to work three back-to-back shifts, stay in local housing and return home for the remaining four days.

"It's all about flexibility and meeting our staff's needs."

Permanent placement also is an option. This comes in to play when "a nurse feels like they found a home and the facility reciprocates."

Currently, QS has 110 active staff members who are in each corner of Kansas and everywhere in between.

"Retention, industry wide is a challenge," Whitlow said. "There is so much competition out there. We make our name by being a family business and having our staff feel a part of that family. They are not just a number to us."

The operations officer noted that QS has been "kind of behind-the-scenes" for too long but is eager to become more visible in the community.

"We want to partner with different organizations, volunteer and give back to the community," he explained.

For instance, when nurses come on board they can donate 10 cents for each dollar they earn to a charitable cause. QS matches these donations dollar for dollar.

Recent donations were made to the Kans for Kids Fighting Cancer Foundation and Central Kansas Dream Center.

Whitlow recalled that a career with QS was not on his radar for a while. Even though he enjoyed working in the office in his younger days, he wasn't sure where the future would take him.

He earned a bachelor's degree in health and exercise science at Colorado State University, then worked as a personal trainer and health coach.

Whitlow also has years of experience with some of the nation's largest medical-related businesses, including Maxim Healthcare Services and Interim HealthCare. In his mid-twenties, he even spent seven months biking around New Zealand until "my money ran out, so it was time to come home!"

Because of Whitlow's employment experience, "Dad would casually hint at working for QS. In 2016, I asked myself: "Why wouldn't I do this? I felt like God's direction led me to do this and honor my parent's legacy."

He is glad for that decision. "Great Bend has been a wonderful home for QS Nurses and my family."

Whitlow and his wife, Breanna, have two sons: Hudson, 4, and Everett, 2. His parents, Terry and Christy who live in Colorado, are "semi-retired but I go to Dad for many things; he is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom!"

