

Employee Spotlight

Meet Laura Voller, Director of Nursing at EBCAP

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When Laura Voller began working at East Bay Community Action Program 11 years ago, she never envisioned attaining her current position as Director of Nursing. “EBCAP invested in me over the years and provided me with the opportunity to grow not only as a nurse, but as a leader,” explains Laura. “Being promoted to Director of Nursing was my proudest moment as an EBCAP employee. It was a huge accomplishment,” she adds.

Laura’s hard work began in 2008 when she was hired as a Data Abstractor. She was responsible for creating electronic medical records and helped EBCAP develop a more effective and efficient system to record and track the health information of EBCAP patients. Laura was then promoted to Nurse Manager and took on the responsibility of supervising the nursing staff at East Bay Family Health Center in Riverside. In the fall of 2018, Laura was promoted once again to the Director of Nursing. She now oversees a nursing team that is comprised of both medical and behavioral health staff.

According to Laura, her team is dedicated to providing comprehensive care and ensuring that patients’ needs are met and optimal support is provided. “I believe we thrive because of the teamwork we exhibit. As a leader, I want to set an example for how I want my staff to work together. I do this by helping each position when I can -- no matter what the task may be. In turn, I see the staff helping each other proactively on a daily basis.” On any given day, the nursing staff at East Bay Family Health Center sees 88 patients.

Providing more than just clinical services, the staff often takes that extra step to connect with patients to see what more can be done to help them. “We do more than just treat the symptoms,” explains Laura. “I work with a very dedicated group of people and we work well together. I’m proud of that and even more proud that our patients notice.”

Laura was inspired to become a nurse in high school when her father was very ill and she spent a good deal of time with him at the hospital. She recalls her interactions with the nursing staff and how caring and dedicated they were. “Spending a lot of time in the hospital, I got a taste of what it was like to be a nurse and meeting all these wonderful nurses inspired me,” she relates.

She has come a long way since her inspiration to become a nurse. When asked what she likes best about working at EBCAP, Laura talks about the people she has helped. “The best thing about working at EBCAP is being able to look back and think about all the people I have helped. It is different than being in the hospital.” Laura makes the point that hospital nurses follow a patient for a short period of time and may not see that person again. In community health, she explains, nurses may follow a patient and their entire family for many years. “Community health is all about the big picture and taking that extra step to understand what is going on with a patient besides their medical needs. It involves collaboration with an entire team to help a patient deal with many issues and get them the help they need,” she explains.

Her supportive staff and the encouragement she receives from administrators motivates Laura every day. “Even when I wake up and think I am going to have a stressful day, I know I am not in it alone. I think this is more important than enjoying the work you do because you can have the best job, but if your co-workers or supervisor aren’t there to support you, it is hard to stay motivated,” she explains. And no one day is like the next she adds. “Every day is completely different. There are clinical issues to deal with, patient needs, staff supervision, problem solving, and of course reading about 100 emails,” she says with a laugh. “I listen a lot – whether people want to vent or come to me for advice.” Added to her busy schedule are other responsibilities including her role as a member of EBCAP’s Safety Committee, Board Performance Improvement Committee, and Health Leadership.

Making time for family, friends and a life outside of work keeps all things in perspective for Laura. And while many of her colleagues know her for her hard work and dedication, some may not know that she is obsessed with sharks. “I used to travel the world to go on shark diving trips. Tiger sharks are my favorite. I even have a Tiger shark tattoo on my ankle.” Laura’s adventures have taken her to such places as the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador, Guadalupe Island in Mexico, Tiger Beach in the Bahamas, diving sites in Florida, and many local spots here in Rhode Island. “If you watch Shark Week, you will still see a lot of the friends that I used to dive with still swimming with sharks,” she relates with a smile.