

# FROM DELIVERY DRIVER TO NURSE: GEORGE HAMILTON FINDS HIS CALLING IN HEALTHCARE



**“It’s about really taking care of the members. I’ve always been super connected to the people I take care of and their families ... You hear their stories and you build more of a personal relationship.”**

**-George Hamilton**

George Hamilton is a very familiar face at the Veterans Home at Union Grove. He’s around a lot – picking up extra shifts and helping on holidays. So, you might not guess that he hasn’t always worked at Union Grove. In fact, George spent a big part of his early career doing a completely different kind of work – for 21 years, he delivered Wonder Bread to stores. A job that, he says, he pursued after the birth of his first child, simply to “pay the bills.”

But when Wonder Bread went out of business in November 2012, George had the opportunity to go back to school with support from the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance program. That’s when he chose a nursing career. George has been a nurse for about six years, and at Union Grove for three of those years. A typical day as a nurse at a veterans home, he says, is about so much more than getting medicine and taking vitals.

“It’s about really taking care of the members. I’ve always been super

connected to the people I take care of and their families,” he said. “You hear their stories and you build more of a personal relationship. One thing that’s nice with long-term care is that you’re usually taking care of a person for an extended period of time and you get to build a relationship with them.”

George says he tries to bring a sense of joy to the community and that he likes to “keep the place a little lighter and a little happier,” humming in the halls or breaking out in song. He doesn’t claim to be a superstar singer, but with eight kids at home, ranging in age from one to 29, he does have an expansive repertoire: “I can sing a country song, or I can sing a Ludacris song. I can go from Barney one minute, to Def Leppard the next. You name it, I’ve heard it and I can remember part of it.”

He says that one of the things he appreciates most about working at Union Grove is the community, from the volunteers who come in to help run activities and staff the deli

(prior to COVID) to the camaraderie of his colleagues. One of his fondest memories is the 100th birthday party held for his grandmother, who was a resident of Union Grove for nine months, where his work family and his biological family celebrated together.

George has a daughter who has also pursued a nursing career, and perhaps a few more of the young ones may decide to join in eventually, as well. The industry could use them! Healthcare professionals are in short supply right now. [The Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis: A 2020 Report](#), which was recently distributed by several Wisconsin organizations, estimates an increase in caregiver vacancies in our state from 19 percent in 2018 to 23.5 percent in 2020. George encourages those who may be interested in healthcare as a career to consider it, especially if you’re an empathetic person who enjoys helping others. “If you legitimately care for people, you’re going to be a great nurse.”