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From The Editors

A TRAVEL NURSES SURVIVAL GUIDE

As I wrote a previous article, I asked myself, "What are some of the techniques that I use when things are getting tough." As we all know, travel nursing isn't always fun. We have plenty of good times and adventure, but there are also times when we want to run and hide.

Yes, survival is what it is all about. It's a jungle out there, and a travel nurse must be prepared to tread through the trenches and come out a victor! Come on, there can't be much difference between surviving in a jungle, and surviving a terrible nursing assignment. Well, here are my 8 tips for survival in Travel Nursing:

1. Shield yourself with a "net" by putting a smile on your face. How can you be sad if you are smiling? Sure, you might be smiling only on the outside, but this is a start. You can shield your patients from knowing that you are having a bad day by wearing a smile!
2. Get rid of the leeches! By staying away from the people who are most commonly the causes of the frustration. Sometimes you can't ignore them, but by getting more involved in nursing care, and father away from the nurses' station, the less these leeches will bother you.

3. Delve into the trenches. One of the best diversion tactics that I have to rely on is spending more time with my patients. Take time out to just visit with them. What can you do for your patients instead of setting up at the nurses station listening to what all is wrong with the unit.
4. When the rainfall is heavy then find shelter. You need to have someone that you can talk to? If nothing else, call your recruiter or get online and find a travel nurse support group. Sometimes things will just kind of resolve themselves if you just tell your frustrations to someone who is going to give you just a little reassurance.
5. In a violent storm or monsoon season it may be necessary to find a lifeboat. Talk to your recruiter about what is going on. Talk to the unit manager or someone who is over the person that you are having trouble with. If you really feel like your nursing license is in danger, then go talk to your recruiter and/or an attorney about getting out of your contract.
6. A positive attitude can keep some of the mosquitoes from getting to you. Go into each day with the thought that you are going to make it the best that you can. That may change twenty minutes into your day, but at least you started out right.

7. Finding the light in the midst of darkness. Find something that makes you happy and surround yourself with it. Go on a little shopping trip and get something that you have always wanted. Find a place of serenity and immerse yourself in meditation. On bad days, I tend to come back to my little ole RV, set outside, and watch the waterfall that I have in my barrel pond. I would definitely suggest that a travel nurse have some kind of small water feature to travel with her.
8. Count down the days. Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel is always refreshing. Mark on your calendar the number of weeks left, or even the number of shifts left. 27 days sounds a lot better than two months!

These tips and tricks may not work for everyone, but for me they keep me going through tough assignments. Remember, that you are there because of your love for nursing without all the politics. Remember that you do care, and that there will always be the next assignment and another exciting adventure in travel nursing.

Destination Spotlight

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

As a child from the Oklahoma Panhandle, I knew Oklahoma City as the “big city far away.” Now some of my fondest memories of Oklahoma City lie in the center of town around my nursing career. Oklahoma City was the place that I first took my state nursing boards, only a few blocks from where three years later a bomb went off. Oklahoma City is where I vacationed at and where I later took a travel nursing assignment.

Oklahoma City is a thriving metropolis of a half-million people in the heart of Oklahoma. At over 608 square miles, it is one of the largest cities in the United States area wise.

The National Cowboy Hall of Fame is a group of Galleries that address the early life of the American Cowboy, western performers, the American rodeo gallery, and life on the western frontier. The wax figures of the early western days are quite impressive along side of the many art exhibits of western performers, including Roy Rogers, Gene Autrey, and John Wayne. They also had a exhibit of the western performers from the television series, “Gunsmoke.” The most recognizable piece of art from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame is the “End of the Trail” statue that stands eighteen feet tall located in the center of the “U” shaped Hall of Fame.

While out on that end of town, don’t forget to stop at the Oklahoma State Firefighters Museum. This building is home to an incredible collection of fire

fighting machinery dating from the mid 1700’s to the present day. Included in this collection is a magnificent collection of arm patches, fire and rescue equipment and alarms, and extends to the memorabilia from the rescue on April 19, 1995, at 9:02 a.m. when the Oklahoma City was hit with major disaster.

You hear the saying, “Where were you when John F. Kennedy was shot?” Well, I wasn’t born at that time, but I do remember that usual day of going home from work, taking my son to school, and watching *The Price Is Right* on the television, when a news flash came across about a disaster in Oklahoma City. I was five hours from the site of the explosion, but I could feel the pain of those suffering as if it was next door. What brought it more to a reality to me was that only a few years before, I had taken my state nursing boards only a few short blocks away.

In the place of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building now stands the memorial of 168 people who were violently killed in the great explosion. A memorial has now been constructed where the building once stood. A water feature is surrounded by 149 chairs, which symbolize adult victims and 19 smaller seats, one for each child that was killed.

Part of the original chain link fence that surrounded the original crime scene is still in place with other individual commemorations from friends, family, and other heart felt Americans that pay their respects to the ones who lost their lives. Also in place is a lone elm tree named, “The

Survivor Tree” which looks out over the new memorial park. Just standing and looking at the park will make your heart sink.

The Myriad Botanical Garden located in downtown Oklahoma City is a paradise that is separated into a wet and lush tropical plant section and a dry area plant section. Plants in the lush tropical area are plants that come from the Amazon, Central Africa, Southeast Asian, and the South Pacific Islands. The plants in the dry area have plants that come from South Africa, Australia, Madagascar, and Mexico. Many varieties of Palms, Cycads, Gingers, Bromeliads, Orchids, and Begonias can be found as you meander through the seventeen acres of lush tropical paradise.

Just down the street from the Botanical Garden you will find yourself in Bricktown. What started out as a commercial wholesale district in the early 1980’s is now a visitor magnet with outstanding dining, a AAA baseball team, and a Bricktown canal that will take you all around to see the different sights.

Among the great restaurants in Bricktown is the Bricktown Brewery. Home to award winning brews and the best barbeque in the west! The first time I went there was during the first months in October 1992 when I took my state boards, then I visited again when I returned for a travel assignment in July of 2004. The food has just gotten better over the years. My personal favorite was their fried green tomatoes, and their famous ribs. They also have specialty brews, which include Copperhead

Amber Ale, Bison American Wheat, Red Brick Ale, Darkhorse Brown Ale, Black Gold Stout, Land Run Lager, and Rock Island Rail Ale. My husband's favorite was the Land Run Lager.

Also located in Bricktown is the Spaghetti Warehouse. Their "Old World" Italian dishes along with a jovial environment make this one fantastic location for that special occasion. Whether it's parmigiana, manicotti, ravioli, or alfredo, you won't be disappointed in their perfectly cooked al' dente pasta.

An American baseball legend, Mickey Mantle, was the inspiration for one of the best steakhouses in Oklahoma. It is here that you will find the best in steaks, seafood, pasta, chicken, and desserts. Not only will the vast pictures on the walls entertain you, but live entertainment is also provided. Whether you're a baseball fan or a steak fan, you definitely won't go home from here disappointed.

Baseball has taken Bricktown by storm via the Oklahoma Redhawks, a AAA team associated with the Texas Rangers. Amongst the modern amenities is a modern scoreboard with an antique flavor to it. Two statues in remembrance of baseball greats, Mickey Mantle and Johnny Bench, are in place to "guard" the park. The seating for over thirteen thousand is arranged with fan in mind. Whether it's seating in the lower level or in the Triple-Play Café, you won't miss any of the action on the field.

For adventure in Oklahoma City you might try White Water Bay or Frontier City. White Water Bay is acres of water slides, a wave pool, and a lazy river. Whether it's the "Big Kahuna," "Bermuda Triangle," or the "Castaway Creek" you will be cooling off in style! Frontier City

is roller coaster mania. The "Silver Bullet" is Oklahoma's first steel looping coaster. The twisted turns of metal is a short ride that will have your stomach in knots. The "Diamond Back" is a double-loop roller coaster that propels forward, comes to a halt, and then hurls riders in reverse through snake-like twists. The "Wildcat," Oklahoma's longest, tallest, and fastest group of helixes loops, twists, and plunges that will thrill any wooden rollercoaster fan. "The Nightmare" is an indoor rollercoaster that will give you a wild thrill with minimal light that seeps in from the cracks in the old barn like structure. Either park will give you never ending excitement all day long.

Shopping is great in Oklahoma City at Crossroads Mall or Quail Springs Mall. Crossroads Mall is located at the Crossroad of I-240 and I-35. Shoppers can enjoy top department stores like Foleys, Bath and Body Works, Famous Footware, JCPenneys, Lane Bryant, Merle Norman Cosmetics, Rue21, Spencers, and Waldenbooks. Adults and children alike can enjoy a ride on the indoor carousel. Quail Springs Mall is located at 2501 West Memorial Road and features 160 stores, a 24-screen theatre, several hair-styling salons, and restaurants for every appetite. Among the stores you will find, Body Central, Eddie Bauer, GAP, Dillard's, Lerner New York, Paint It Yourself Pottery, and Victoria's Secret.

For outdoor adventure, you might find yourself at one of the area lakes: Lake Hefner, Lake Overholser, or Stanley Draper Lake.

Lake Overholser, named after an Oklahoma City mayor, is Oklahoma City's oldest reservoir. It was constructed in 1919 to supply water to a treatment plant. The lake is situated off of old Route 66 between Council Road and Morgan Road. Fishermen enjoy the fishing piers, boats ramps, and fish attractors. A covered picnic area is available.

Sailing, boating, and jet skiing are permitted on Lake Overholser, but swimming is prohibited. There are tables also a canal that joins it to Lake Hefner.

Lake Hefner is the home of the best winds in Oklahoma. Lake Hefner poses restrictions on water skiing and jet skis, so the only traffic out there is a few fishermen, which lends to a great place to go windsurfing or sail boating. The Lake Hefner Trails is a trail used for walking, jogging, bicycling, and rollerblading along with entire shoreline of the lake. Lake Hefner also offers two eighteen-hole public golf courses. The North course offers hills and water hazards on several holes, while the South Course offers fairways lined with trees and sand bunkers. Rated as the 4th best public course in the state of 1996, this is a course that any golfer shouldn't miss.

Lake Stanley Draper is a 2900 square acre lake located just east of Oklahoma City, which was built in 1963. The amenities located at Lake Stanley Draper include fishing docks, fish attractors with boating and sailing permitted. Jet skiing and water skiing is allowed there also, but swimming is prohibited.

No matter what kind of adventure you're out for, Oklahoma City is in the central place for fun!

Company Spotlight

**MIDWEST
STAFFING**

[HTTP://WWW.TRAVEL-NURSE.COM/](http://www.travel-nurse.com/)

What kind of benefits does Midwest Staffing offer?

Midwest staffing offers a paid one week vacation after one year of service, a tax advantage program that allows a portion of your income to be tax free, weekly paychecks that are directly deposited into your checking account, free one bedroom housing, health care benefits through Blue Cross, Blue Shield, supplemental insurance through AFLAC, an online calendar, referral bonuses, and completion bonuses on each assignment.

What about my specific housing arrangements?

Midwest Staffing provides FREE private housing for our nurses. We encourage our nurses to take their families on travel assignments. They have to pay only the difference in the cost of a one-bedroom apartment and the size they need to accommodate their family. If you already have a place to stay, then we offer a healthy housing stipend that is paid with your weekly pay.

Where in the Midwest can I travel?

Currently there are job openings in Colorado, Arizona, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, California, Virginia, Nevada,



New Jersey, Washington, North Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, Montana, Florida, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. If there is place where you want to go, then we will contact that hospital and make every attempt to get you placed. If we can't find the exact assignment you want then we will refer you to someone who can and welcome you back anytime.

Are there any other advantages to working with Midwest Staffing?

"We're Not #1, You Are" is our motto at Midwest Staffing, Inc. We are nurse-owned and offer 24/7 services to our nurses and facilities 365 days per year. Our recruiters work diligently to provide a package tailor-made for each nurse. We offer an on-line application process to allow potential employees to complete this process at their convenience. Our goal is to be your agency of choice! We know nurses have many choices and we will go the extra mile to make you a Midwest Staffing nurse!

How is Midwest Staffing different than other companies?

We are nurse owned and operated. We are former travel nurses and understand the highs and lows of the travel nurse profession. We are a mid sized company and you are not a number and we will give you personalized service. We maintain a full time human resource department to assist with any problems. Our recruiters are paid a salary and do not have to depend on volume. We will be there for our nurses 24/7. You talk to real people not voice mail. We offer medical insurance that is high quality and will go with you from state to state with low deductibles and office co pay. We have free life insurance and a free financial advisor to assist you in planning for retirement through IRA's. We give vacation pay based on the hours you worked during the year.

For More Information Contact:

Bre nda Dale
Human Resources Director
Midwest Staffing
1003 Perry Ave
Perry, OK 73077
580-336-6100

b.dale@travel-nurse.com
<http://www.travel-nurse.com/>

Hospital Happenings

**INTEGRIS
HEALTH INC.**

As a travel nurse, if you find yourself in Oklahoma, you just might find yourself working at one of the many hospitals in the Integris Health Incorporated system. With a goal of improving the health of the people and the communities that they serve, Integris health is a leader in healthcare in the State of Oklahoma.

Integris currently has thirteen hospitals including two in Oklahoma City, Southwest Medical Center and Baptist Medical Center. Other Oklahoma hospital locations include Blackwell, Clinton, Enid, Grove, Madill, Miami, Pryor, Spencer, and Yukon. Specialty clinics are located in Edmond, Kingfisher, Midwest City, and Norman.

Awards won by Integris Health including 100 best companies for working mothers by Working Mother Magazine, 100 “most wired” health system by Hospital and Health Networks Magazine, National Research Corporation consumer choice and quality leader award, “Top 100 Cardio-

vascular Hospital” by HCIA, Inc., Consumer Choice for heart care by the National Research Corporation, and the Nova Award by the American Hospital Association honor for exemplary and innovative community involvement for their involvement in the Western Village Academy elementary charter school.

Some of the milestones achieved by Integris hospitals include the first human heart transplant, heart and lung transplant, liver transplant, and the first cochlear ear implant for an Oklahoma child. Integris health is making healthcare history with state of the art care in cardiology, oncology, medical humor, stroke care, burn care, rehabilitation, and women’s health.

What exactly is expected of the travel nurse who takes an assignment with Integris health? The orientation on the floor that I work on was only four hours. After that, the nurse is expected to take patients on his/her own. The teamwork and travel nurse support is good because quite a few of the nurses are also travel or agency nurses themselves.

The charge nurse quickly answers

my questions about hospital policy and procedure, and if I had any other questions, I always feel comfortable in approaching my unit manager. In fact, my unit manager has been very supportive in my choice to make a move to unit in which I had no direct experience in, but had “indirect” experience by working in other closely related units.

As for floating, the travel and agency nursing staff are expected to float whenever needed. The travel nurse is not expected to float anywhere that you do not have experience. Once they wanted to float me to ICU, which was quickly shot down since I have only rural ICU float experience, and another time I did float to PACU since I have float recovery experience. On that float, I was impressed that the house supervisor actually came to me and asked if I wanted to float there. I have visited one other floor several times, and feel like it’s my second home!

This is one travel assignment to try if you love adventure in the world of technology and nursing care!

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Epstein LaRue, Owner and Chief Executive of Highway Hypodermics
Melissa S. James, Special Consultant and Columnist

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