

# UW Health: Healthcare hero - nurse practitioner helps little hearts and families heal

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MADISON, Wis - If your child has open heart surgery at American Family Children's Hospital, you will likely experience the remarkable care provided by Karie Canada, a pediatric cardiovascular nurse practitioner and advanced practice provider (APP), UW Health Kids.

Karie works with pediatric patients born with heart abnormalities—congenital heart defects—and those with acquired heart disease. It is Karie's commitment to the patients and families she serves that led UW Health to highlight her contributions to her field during inaugural National APP Week.

Brittany Wanless of Sauk County credits Canada for helping her family navigate the complex care that her baby Amelia (Mimi) required following the first of four heart surgeries at American Family Children's Hospital. Canada started working with the Wanless family via the Interstage Home Monitoring program, which is designed to help parents detect physiologic changes that may precede dangerous changes in blood flow, something relatively common among children with heart defects like Mimi's.

"It was so nice to know that Karie was always there when I needed her," said Wanless. "My husband and I often needed to call her when we were concerned or unsure about something that we were seeing in Mimi, and Karie would also check in with us multiple times each week as well. She really made our life so much easier, and we couldn't be more grateful."

Canada says she enjoys the interstage home management part of her job, which is

essentially the period between the first and second surgery for patients with certain heart abnormalities. It's a crucial time as these patients' situations can be very tenuous and it adds a lot of stress on the families due to the tasks and monitoring that must be done at home.

"My goal in the interstage program is to not only make sure the child is growing and thriving but to offer resources, education and support for the family going through such a stressful time in their life," said Canada. "There are several patients that I keep in touch with even after this stage is over. Building relationships with the families and watching their children recover from surgery and go on to thrive in life is extremely rewarding."

Canada attributes her love for the job and her patients' success to the team approach. She works alongside pediatric cardiothoracic surgeons, cardiac anesthesiologists, cardiac intensive care nurse practitioners and intensivists, physician assistants, nurses, nutrition specialists, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, and occupational and speech therapists who are specially trained to care for newborns with heart defects.

"I am fortunate to work with such a collaborative team to provide the best care for our patients. We all bring different experiences, thought processes and values to provide comprehensive decision-making," Canada said.

UW Health honors advanced practice providers like Canada this week for the inaugural National APP Week, which honors the contributions of physician assistants, nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, clinical nurse specialists and certified nurse-midwives.