

National Nurses Week

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

A Nurse on a Mission of Compassionate Care

Simeon Gayle is not immune to hard work in the face of adversity, but he also has a keen eye for things others may take for granted.

Simeon went into nursing because he wanted a career where he could take care of people in a nurturing way, something he didn't get enough of growing up.

"I wanted to give back," Simeon said. "I wanted to give compassion. When the family can't advocate for a patient, the nurse is there."

While attending the Phillips School of Nursing at Mount Sinai Beth Israel, Simeon worked full time, attending school and raising two younger brothers. He managed household logistics, oversaw his siblings' schooling and his own, and held down his full-time job.

After graduating with the highest honors and serving as class valedictorian, he became an ICU nurse at Mount Sinai Beth Israel

one year before the pandemic hit. That's when his grit and compassion were put to the test.

When asked if he felt safe going into work, Simeon said he went into nursing knowing what he needed to do at a time like that: Go in fighting and give patients his all. "It was amazing to see nurses from all backgrounds galvanized to come together and try to make a difference fighting an unknown disease," he said.

At the most challenging times, compassion was the strongest fight he had. When a patient was at the point of being removed from life support, Simeon asked their family what the patient's favorite songs were. He played their favorite music and bathed the patient before they passed.

After the first wave subsided, Simeon's mission for the best patient care and compassion was still his greatest strength. Before going on a long-awaited trip to South Africa recently, he noticed the hair of one of his long-term

patients had grown out, and his nails had grown long.

Dedicated to compassion and nurturing patients who may be unconscious or unable to communicate, Simeon and a colleague went and bought shears. Even though Simeon had a very heavy workload, he prioritized his time to spend an hour cutting the patient's hair and nails. The patient, who had been on supportive care for months, sadly passed while he was away. Still, Simeon took comfort in knowing the patient smiled after his haircut and being told he looked like a "billion bucks."

"That's what nursing is about," Simeon said, "You have to have that compassion regardless of the situation."

Simeon's brothers are teachers and continue their new family tradition of pursuing advanced education. One brother is working on his second master's degree, and the other brother is working on his doctorate.

— Mount Sinai Health Systems



Nurse Simeon Gayle redefines strength and compassion

A Nurse's Account of Caring for a Very Special Patient



Nurse Jamie Ruhmshottel (L) and Makenlove Cadet Pierre Louis

Although she was somewhat confused from her infection, the moment I met Makenlove Cadet Pierre Louis, she smiled so sweetly, very briefly, before crying uncontrollably.

she had already endured a month of non-stop testing, procedures, treatments, and complications. She was completely debilitated and had lost all of her will and independence

I learned about what was im-

moved up and down. This sound and movement helped her relax and distracted her hands so she would not pull on the necessary but often uncomfortable medical equipment. Understanding how important it is mentally and physically to be out of bed, I enlisted the help of our incredibly skilled physical therapist. Makenlove fought this because she felt so tired and defeated, but we pushed her each and every day, muscle by muscle, until we could get her out of bed and sitting up.

At one point, she had taken a turn for the worse, and there were thoughts that her condition may be irreversible. The future was looking grim. I recall one moment when she began to cry

around this time and mouthed the words, "Leave me alone. I am going to die."

My heart sank, and I told her point blank, "I am not going to let you die. Please trust me."

We continued on every day with the emotional and physical work alongside the medical treatments. As she improved, we were able to work hard to get her off the ventilator. Once she was breathing on her own again, and her painful wounds had started to heal, she had a renewed spirit.

I have a video of the first day she was able to speak after three months of being voiceless. Shortly thereafter, she was able to eat and drink again just in time for her birthday, for which we threw

a celebration. I ordered balloons and cupcakes, and we all sang. A few weeks later, she was discharged home with her family and walked out of the hospital. Walking out of the hospital is very unusual for someone who has undergone what she had.

I learned through this experience that nursing is not only about administering medical treatments and carrying out technical skills. It's the emotional connection, the acts of compassion, and the consistent, honest love that carries people through their most challenging days.

— Jamie Ruhmshottel
Nurse Manager of the
Respiratory Institute at The
Mount Sinai Hospital



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