ARH expands diabetes care team with new educator

Special to Appalachian Newspapers

Appalachian Regional Healthcare announced in a statement Aug. 5 that Tiffany Dixon, RN, LDE, has been named its new diabetes educator.

Dixon, the statement said, has worn many hats at ARH. She started as a receptionist. Then she became a medical assistant. Now she is a Registered Nurse and a Licensed Diabetes Educator. Her path was not always simple, but every step shaped who she is today, the statement said.

Dixon did not always know that diabetes education was even a career. That changed once she became a nurse and began working in Endocrinology.

"That's where I discovered the true world of diabetes and its complexity," she said.

The statement said Dixon's passion for diabetes education is deeply personal. Her aunt, who helped raise her, passed away from complications of type 2 diabetes while Dixon was still in nursing school.

"Losing her was extremely hard for me because she was a mother to me," she said. "I wish I had known more about diabetes and how to help care for her."

That loss, combined with her growing knowledge of endocrinology, set her on a new course.

"I knew Diabetes Education was my calling," she said. "I want to help individuals and their families understand the disease, help develop skills needed to manage it, and feel supported throughout their journey."

Becoming a nurse was not easy, the statement said. Dixon worked full time as a medical assistant while taking night classes to earn her nursing degree. She was also raising two young children at the time.

"I somehow never missed a game" of her son's, she said, even while balancing school, work and family.

Her journey included real hardship. She lost her aunt and later went into preterm labor at 24 weeks while finishing school. She kept going anyway.

"I was not going to quit," she said.

Dixon graduated from nursing school in June and welcomed her daughter that October, just before her 30th birthday.

"I give complete credit to God for everything," she said. "He carried me through it."

Dixon believes every patient deserves to feel welcomed and valued the moment they walk through the door.

"Every person is different, but everyone deserves compassion," she said.

The statement said Dixon often finds that patients think they already understand their diabetes, only to be surprised by how much they learn in a single visit.

"They are shocked by all the new information they learned from just one session," she said.

For patients who are newly diagnosed and those who have lived with diabetes for years, the statement said, Dixon's approach is the same at its core: Listen first.

"I want to recognize what knowledge and experience they already have, identify their current needs, and work with them to develop new solutions," she explained.

One of the biggest struggles she sees is something called "diabetes burnout", when the daily demands of monitoring blood sugar, taking medication, and making food choices simply wear a person down.

"The goal is to help reduce burnout by renewing their sense of hope," she said, "and building confidence by recognizing progress."

Dixon's main office is in Paintsville, but her work takes her across the region. She sees patients in both Paintsville and Hazard, in person and virtually. She also helps lead 11 different Diabetes Support Groups held once a month, including a brand new group in Magoffin County that she leads herself.

Community events, Dixon said, are one of her favorite parts of the job.

"I get to go out and meet new people and learn the barriers people face in other communities," she said, "and see how we can help overconme these barriers."

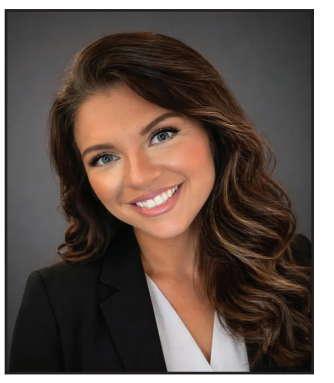
Dixon said she hopes providers will lean on diabetes educators more often.

"Providers don't always have enough time during their appointments to address every concern," she said. "When providers and diabetes educators work together, patients receive more supportive, compassionate care."

"I've had the opportunity to see Tiffany's heart for serving others, and I know she'll make a tremendous impact on the lives of our patients," said ARH System Diabetes Education Coordinator Ashley Webb. "She understands that diabetes education is about much more than numbers. It's about empowering people with the knowledge, confidence, and support they need to live healthier lives. We're thrilled to have her join our team."

Webb commented that, "Every new team member allows us to extend our reach, strengthen our programs, and ensure more people have access to the education and support they deserve."

Outside of work, Dixon relies on her husband Adam, a police officer in Prestonsburg, and their children, Connor, Addisyn, Cali and stepson Joshua. The family also shares their home with a cat named Loki and a dog named Ares.



Tiffany Dixon, RN, LDE

"I wanted to be someone my kids would be proud of," she said. "Everything I do and have done is for them."

For anyone considering a similar path, Dixon has simple advice: Find a mentor, ask questions, and never let self-doubt win.

"Don't ever think you can't do something you are passionate about," she said. "I never thought I would be anything more than a single mom at 19. I never thought college was an option for me until I took a leap of faith and gave it everything I had, every tear, every late night. It wasn't easy, but I was worth it."

Today, the statement said, Dixon continues that same leap of faith every day, one patient, one family, and one community at a time.

HUB

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Association...So Mountain Association, St. Vincent Mission, a lot of local churches and a lot of groups at the time, including Christian Appalachian Project, came together to be part of this disaster recovery group."

In 2025, the Climate Smart Communities Initiative (CSMI) awarded a $100,000 grant that enabled the Floyd County group to work with climate adaptation experts at the Central Appalachian Network's Community Resilience and Adaptation Working Group (CRAWG) based on a proposal that they developed and submitted together.

The grant provided not only financial resources but also expert technical support to

guide Floyd County's efforts in flood mitigation, infrastructure upgrades, and emergency planning.

"With this specific $100,000, we did three $25,000 requests for proposals. One was for a community resilience hub, one was for flood mapping, which Ohio University helped us with, and the other one, which to me is as important or most important, was for housing. What can we do on the housing side? The judge has worked really hard. We've got the higher-ground projects, but that's government money. We're looking for private investment....We've got to get people to want to invest in Floyd County to do housing in Floyd County, and affordable housing."

Allen said "her big thing" has been a community resilience hub, which she said Floyd County needs whenever a flood or other disasters occur.

"When you look at our county, we know the problems we've had, and at the community center, we can use that if we have to, but it's still not set up the way that I feel like it needs to be set up," she said. "We need to be able to have a place for people to stay in emergency situations. I'd like to have a place for our people who are coming in, all these teams that sometimes need a place to stay. Churches are awesome to help with that, but sometimes there's just not enough room, so how can we help with that? Then I would like to have a commercial kitchen, laundry for people to come and do laundry if they need to, and then a place to receive supplies and a place to distribute supplies."

Allen said a community resilience hub, for which the Mountain Association has completed a study, would be like a "one-stop shop" for residents affected by disasters.

"And everybody in this county would know if we need help, that's where you go," she said. "If you want to bring supplies, that's where you take them."

She said that St. Vincent Mission at David was negotiating to purchase a building at Allen and use it as a community resilience hub.

"So, what we want to do is partner with St. Vincent as a fiscal court and basically do almost like a memorandum of understanding or agreement that, in the event of an emergency, we can utilize that building," Allen said.

Allen said she can also envision a satellite hub in the future.

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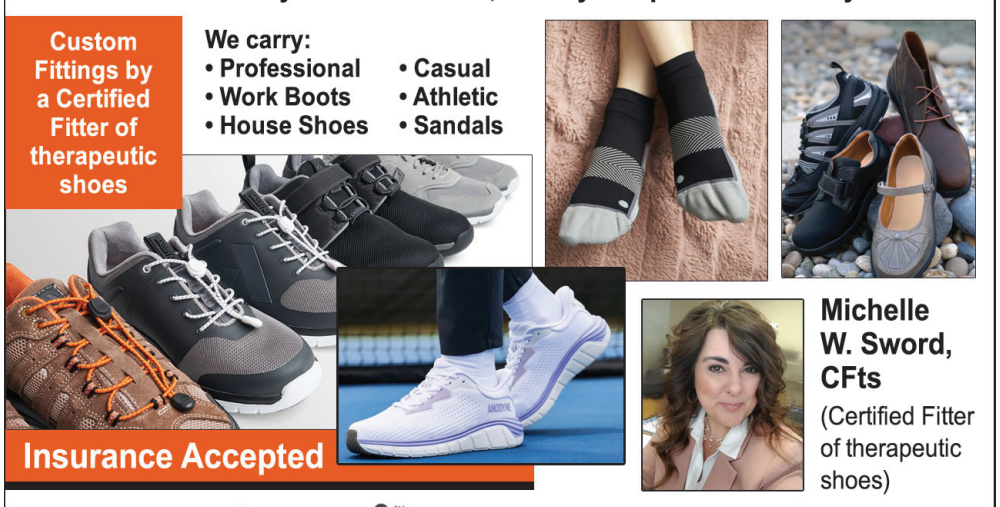
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