

Cortland's Crossland wins statewide nursing scholarship

Alisha Crossland plans to keep the promise she made to family members – and herself – and a scholarship from the West Virginia Health Care Association will help the future nurse accomplish her goal.

The 2007 Tucker County High School graduate joined Cortland Acres in 2009 as a certified nursing assistant. Although she has known since early childhood what she wanted to do with her life, circumstances kept her from fully pursuing that goal until last fall.

"I've always wanted to be a nurse," Crossland said. "When I was little I liked to take care of things – my baby dolls, the dogs. My mom got me a stethoscope and a thermometer."

She saw an ad for a CNA class in *The Parsons Advocate*, trained at Cortland and started immediately after graduation. But she didn't stop thinking about going to nursing school, as she told her family regularly.

Her grandfather, Bill Baker, knew her plans. And shortly before her father, Bo Pennington, died in 2012, the two talked about her career.

"Two days before my Dad died I had promised him I would go to nursing school," Crossland said. "I got really determined after that."

With the support of family, Crossland balances work, school and family to work on her RN degree at Davis & Elkins College. She generally works three days a week at Cortland and goes to class three days a week.

Her mother, Carol, husband, Jason, and grandparents Ellen Baker and Debbie and Gary Crossland help with 6-year-old son Joshua and other needs.

"I have one day off, and I spend that with Josh," she said, noting she does work-study at the Five Rivers Public Library as well. "And I have to find time to study. It's hard, but it's worth it."

Cortland Acres Administrator Beth Clevenger and Director of Nursing Robin Eye work with Crossland on her schedule. Clevenger said she admires the young lady she has known for several years.

"She's very determined and dedicated," Clevenger said. "She works hard and is really personable and pleasant. At Cortland Acres we're committed to helping people advanced, and this is a great example of that."

Crossland is the first Cortland employee to receive the competitive statewide scholarship from the West Virginia Health Care Association. She will receive \$2,200 to help with her college expenses.

"Oh my gosh, I was so excited," Crossland said. "I've put a lot of hard work into this, and this pushes me to do it even more. I don't have that extra money to pay for school, so it will really help a lot."

Crossland said she loves working at Cortland Acres, and with her RN she will have the option of advancing while still working in her home county and doing what she loves.

"I like the smiles on the residents' faces, doing things for them that make their day," Crossland said.

She also is proud of keeping her promise to herself and her family.

“I’ve never regretted going back to school,” Crossland said. “When it gets tough I sit back and I tell myself who I promised and what I promised them I was going to do.”