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**Holly Edinger**, Sacred Heart Healthcare System  
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Parish Nursing: Supporting the Homeless in Allentown

In 1912 Sacred Heart Hospital was founded by German nuns who came to Allentown to help with an outbreak of cholera. This legacy is the cornerstone of Sacred Heart Hospital and is one of the reasons that the hospital continues to be a leader in community health and compassionate care. It is the Parish Nursing Program that continues to embody the legacy of those German nuns in the heart of the community. The Parish Nursing Program serves community clients without judgment or bias, and encourages people to meet their health goals on their journey to overall holistic health.

The Parish Nurses are registered nurses stationed at soup kitchens, homeless shelters and other outreach sites almost every day of the week. The Nurse may be a health educator, an advocate, a referral agent, or a voice of faith and hope. Sometime the nurse is simply a caring listener for a person who feels alone. Currently, Parish Nurses are at six outreach sites in Allentown. The Parish Nurses help community members who are chronically homeless or whose lives are in temporary crisis and who just may need a free meal or place to sleep. They help connect people who have health problems or concerns with the community and medical resources they need to heal and they provide help through community resources and partner nonprofits. The Nurses have been known to find work boots for a man so he could start a new job or a bus ticket for a woman to get to doctor's appointment.

One thing that all of the Sacred Heart staff has learned from Parish Nursing is that a little kindness can go a very long way in making someone healthy and happy. Please visit [www.shh.org](http://www.shh.org) to learn more or to support the work of Parish Nursing.