



24 Sustainability Success Stories in 2024

Story 22 of 24: Nursing and Sustainability

Health Care Sustainability and Nurse Power at UPMC

Christine Peabody is the Director of Perioperative and Surgical Services. Her story is a testament to the crucial role nurses play in identifying and implementing sustainable practices in health care.

Christine's journey into sustainability began in the operating room, where she noticed inefficiencies. "I was asking questions, noticing things like the over-ordering of supplies," she recalled.

It didn't stop there; Christine also observed that when a surgeon transferred from another hospital, new equipment had to be purchased while the surgeon's existing, unused equipment at the old hospital sat idle. "All of that got me thinking, 'Why isn't there a more sustainable approach to equipment and supplies?'"

Christine learned that there were green teams at several UPMC hospitals, the [UPMC Center for Sustainability](#), [Clinicians for Climate Action](#), and [several other](#) groups at UPMC that were asking similar questions and working on projects and ideas to reduce waste and decrease the negative environmental impact of the practice of medicine. She decided to join the conversation and take action.

Christine has seen the potential for change in many areas and has eagerly volunteered her unit for several sustainability projects. This is a way for her team to be at the forefront of finding solutions and implementing them. This has led to involvement in initiatives such as the nitrous oxide use reduction pilot project, a waste management pilot project to improve the recycling of medical waste, redesigning Cardinal surgical packs to reduce unused supplies, battery recycling, and donating unused supplies to Global Links. The Swap Shop (an online platform for posting and finding office supplies and furniture no longer in use at UPMC units or hospitals) has been another creative initiative that began at UPMC Shadyside.

Through her work and conversations with other nurses and health care professionals, Christine has discovered that people at UPMC care about waste and the environment.

"We're already doing these things at home, recycling milk cartons, and reducing waste in our personal lives, so why not bring those habits to the hospital?" Christine said. She encourages fellow nurses to speak up for patient care and for the planet.

Christine believes the key to making real change in health care sustainability is simple: *asking questions*. "It's just identifying a need and knowing how to escalate that, and who to ask to get things started," she explained. Beyond these specific projects, Christine's message is clear: nurses can be powerful agents of change in environmental responsibility and health care sustainability.

Christine's journey shows us that sustainability in health care begins with the willingness to observe, ask questions, and advocate for change. Nurses like Christine remind us that the road to a more sustainable health care system is paved with small but significant actions, and that every nurse has the power to make a difference.

To stay updated on health care sustainability at UPMC, join our [Viva Engage](#) page.