

## IAFN's Spotlight-on-a-Member



**Stephanie Carlson**

**LOCATION:** Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

**WORK SETTING:** Regina General Hospital, Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Program

**FORENSIC NURSING EXPERIENCE:** Stephanie has been a forensic nurse since 2004

**YEARS OF IAFN MEMBERSHIP:** 13 years

**Tell us more about your forensic nursing role:** I am the full-time coordinator of a hospital based program that serves a diverse population aged 16 and over. Fourteen nurses work in the two acute care hospitals in our city and we travel to either hospital as needed. I also teach a SANE course through Saskatchewan Polytechnic. I sit on the Child Abuse Prevention Committee and our community SART.

I have taken onsite and online SANE adult and pediatric courses, as well as having a certificate in forensic nursing from UCR. I try to attend at least one relevant conference each year and I am grateful for all of the webinars and online learning opportunities through IAFN, the Canadian Forensic Nurses Association, SAFE-TA, EVAWI, Tribal Forensic Healthcare, the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, and the many other wonderful sources of learning for nurses. I also completed the Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course in St. Louis and worked for several years as a community coroner.

**Why did you become a forensic nurse or decide to work with forensic nurses?** Like many others, I am an emergency nurse who stumbled into forensic nursing. Sheila Early gave a one-day workshop on sexual assault care at the National Emergency Nurses Association annual conference in 2003. I had assumed that our emergency department would train all of our nurses and, because I'm a little older and have to work harder to retain new information than our newest generation of nurses, I thought I should get a head start. I took an online SANE course that fall and an onsite course the following spring and I began working taking other forensic nursing courses online. By the time I looked over my shoulder and realized I was alone and that the hospital had no plan to pay for training anyone, I was absolutely captivated by the unique union of nursing and forensic care. I began performing exams under physician supervision until I received SANE-A certification through IAFN in 2006. I toured programs in Canada and the US to see how other programs operated. I have found forensic nurses to be very generous with their knowledge and time for those who are new to the discipline.

For the first five years, I was the only SANE and I gained a good deal of experience before we launched a program. [That is one way of saying that I must have made every possible mistake.] Our numbers have more than doubled and I would not be able to keep up the pace now. I'm so grateful to work with a team of highly competent nurses and for an administration that is very supportive of our program.

**Please state why this member should be Spotlighted.**

Stephanie Carlson is one of those people who do things simply because it needs to be done! As a forensic nurse examiner in a medium sized Canadian Prairie city, she has changed the way the forensic patient population is cared for in that community. She leads the only Nurse Examiner program in Saskatchewan, teaches the only forensic examiner course offered there and continues to contribute to the Forensic and Emergency Nursing specialties. She is a long-standing member of IAFN and the Canadian Forensic Nurses Association and serves as the current President of the National Emergency Nurses Association. Her kindness and caring for her patients and others stands out like a welcoming beacon. It is no wonder those in need of her specialized skills know they are safe in her care. Stephanie shares her knowledge and skills unselfishly, seeks answers to questions others do not even consider and is always the nursing advocate for her patients.

