

TINA GREEN

A real dream vacation

Lakeland nurse saves a life in Hawaii, gets scholarship offer

ST. JOSEPH — Tina Green, an LPN at the Birthplace at Lakeland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph, went on a once-in-a-lifetime vacation to Hawaii last month and had an experience she never would have dreamed of.

Green was in Hawaii with her husband, Terry, and daughter Sierra, to celebrate her 25th wedding anniversary in May. While climbing the famous Diamond Head crater May 6 she administered first aid to Claude Martin, a California resident who was suffering from extreme heat exhaustion, likely saving his life. He was lifted off the mountain by helicopter and taken to the hospital by ambulance.

In gratitude, Martin and his wife, Kathy, herself a nurse educator, established a \$5,000 scholarship for Green and her colleagues to pursue RN degrees.

"You're just the kind of person we need on the front lines of nursing to be everything you can be in the 21st century," Kathy Martin told Green during a surprise Skype presentation May 20.

In addition to the scholarship, Green received Lakeland Health Foundation's Caring Angel pin. Dr. Loren B. Hamel, president and CEO of Lakeland HealthCare, gave Green a badge emblazoned with a heart.

"She not only brings her heart to work every day — as it turns out, she took her heart on vacation," Hamel said.

Green, a Galien resident, has been with Lakeland on the obstetrics unit for eight years. She earned her licensed practical nurse degree from Lake Michigan College and is pursuing a registered nurse degree from Excelsior College, an online institution.

Herald-Palladium Staff Writer John Matuszak talked with Green about her life-saving efforts.

I guess this was probably a dream vacation for you that had an undreamt-of turn. Tell us how it happened.

We were in Hawaii celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary. We had planned it earlier, but I was



Contributed photo

Tina Green, third from left, LPN at the BirthPlace at Lakeland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph, receives the Caring Angel pin from, from left, Brenda Schwartz, Patient Care Manager, St. Joseph BirthPlace; David Burghart, President, Lakeland Health Foundations; and Loren B. Hamel, MD, President and CEO, Lakeland HealthCare. While on vacation in Hawaii, Green treated Claude Martin for heat exhaustion, likely saving his life. Martin and his wife, Kathy, have donated a \$5,000 scholarship for Lakeland nurses to obtain their RN degrees.

in a car accident and had broken my leg and had to have surgery, so we had postponed it. It was my husband's birthday and he wanted to climb Diamond Head that morning.

Is it a pretty tough climb?

I'm not sure how high it is, but I stopped three times to rest. You want to go up early (before it gets too hot). It was about 10:30 or 11. And you don't want to go up without a lot of hydration. We got about 100 steps from the top and I saw this gentleman sitting on the steps, and he didn't look like he was doing well. I told my husband and daughter "Oh, just go on to the top. I'm going to rest here." He was by himself (Kathy Martin had gone to the top). I asked him "Sir, are you OK?" He didn't say anything. I said "Sir, can you hear me?" He fell over, and I just caught his head before it hit the rocks. He was not sweating, which is a big indicator in heat (exhaustion). He was starting to seize a little bit.

What did you do to help?

My daughter had come back down to look for me. We put her cloth backpack under his head. We poured water on his head, and he stopped shaking at that point. Other people were giving us bottles of water. When we got him down the steps someone had a cooler

with ice and I packed his armpits with ice.

Do you think this was life-threatening?

For him it would have been. He was in failure. They told me later that this was their last trip together, before he started dialysis. He wanted to climb Diamond Head one last time.

What do you think would have happened if you had gone to the top with your family instead of keeping an eye on Mr. Martin?

It might have had a different outcome. It might have been bad.

When did you again hear from the Martins?

We exchanged numbers.

I wanted to know how he was doing. I would have worried. They wanted to take us out to dinner. I said "No, you need to rest and enjoy the rest of your vacation. That's what we're going to do." They sent me a small box of chocolates and a card, and they sent my daughter a waterproof backpack (to replace the one they used as a pillow). I didn't really expect more than that.

And then they contacted the hospital. What happened then?

After they contacted the hospital (Kathy Martin called David Burghart, president of Lakeland Health Foundations, the day after they returned) it

escalated from there. I didn't mean for it to go so far. It's overwhelming. The scholarship is for the unit, which is great. I learn from my fellow nurses all the time, every single day. It's wonderful.

Are you going to take advantage of the scholarship?

I'm not exactly sure. I'm doing an online RN program through Excelsior College in Albany, N.Y. I'm over half-way through. Hopefully by the end of the year or the beginning of next year I'll be through. I've been on a pay-as-you-go basis. I haven't taken out any student loans. It can get quite expensive.

What interested you in nursing and working with babies?

A lot of it comes from my family having premature babies and going to Bronson Hospital with the preemies. I like to be around babies. I had worked in factories and I got tired of that.

What was your coworkers' reaction to what happened?

They were a little shocked because I never said anything.

You really came back with an amazing story.

I think God puts us in places for a reason, and I'm glad I was there for that.

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