

NEWS RELEASE - for immediate release

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MEDICAL CENTER'S 'AIR FORCE' MEMBER HELPING PEOPLE BREATHE EASIER

Marta Duffer is part of The Medical Center's "air force."

As a registered respiratory therapist, it is her job to help people win the war to breathe. Her weapons and gear include oxygen, breathing treatments, incubators and ventilators. She and other respiratory therapists are part of the hospital's CPR team.

"I'm fascinated by the many different aspects of it. I like the education and the rehabilitative part," she said. "It's very adventurous. We're all over the hospital. We get to see people with different conditions and get to know the patients."

She has been employed at The Medical Center for a year and three months.

"It's the only place I have worked as a therapist," she said.

Working with people is something Duffer has always wanted to do. As a young girl growing up in the former Soviet Union, she wanted to be an educator. She never dreamed she would be working in the medical field.

"There was no such profession (as a respiratory therapist)," she said.

In fact, she said the path that guided her to her career was "almost an accident." She and a cousin came to the United States on an extended sight-seeing vacation. They had traveled to various states before arriving in Arizona.

That's where Duffer fell in love with the man who is now her husband, Jim.

"We used to eat in the same restaurant," she said. "He noticed that I was reading a hardcover book – not a magazine or a newspaper – and decided to talk to me."

While Duffer's cousin eventually returned to the former Soviet Union, Duffer decided to stay. The Duffers have been married for a little more than five years.

"(Jim) was driving me to the airport when he proposed to me," she said with a smile.

The Duffers eventually moved to Bowling Green, and that is where Duffer's fascination with respiratory therapy began. She had read about the career and thought it sounded interesting. She later received an associate's degree in applied science from Western Kentucky University and **an Associate's Degree in General Studies from Bowling Green Technical College**, attended a registry program at Paducah Community College and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in health care administration with a minor in business at Western. She plans to eventually pursue a master's degree in health care administration.

"I'm thinking of having a double major – possibly in geriatrics," she said.

Duffer was worried the language barrier would hinder her in school, but that wasn't the case – she's an honors student.

"I was terrified because I thought my English wasn't good enough," she said. "The first book (in English) I read cover to cover was 'Forrest Gump.'"

Juggling a career and college has been interesting for Duffer. She goes to school on weekdays and works on weekends.

"It has been good," she said. "I get to see the program here and not in clinicals."