

# 2026 WOCNCB Certified Nurse of the Year Essay

Kelly Chapman embodies the very highest ideals of the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB®). For more than two decades, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to certification integrity, lifelong learning, professional accountability, and the advancement of certified wound, ostomy, and continence nursing. Since earning her WOCNCB Certified Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse (CWOCN) credential in 2004, Kelly has not merely maintained certification standards; she has actively stewarded them.

Kelly's career reflects a deep and enduring understanding that WOCNCB certification is not a static credential, but a professional responsibility. Through her contributions, she has strengthened the credibility, visibility, and influence of WOCNCB-certified nursing. Her work has shaped practice environments, elevated professional expectations, and ensured that certification excellence is lived out in daily care delivery.

## **Certification Integrity and Professional Competence**

Kelly Chapman consistently upholds WOCNCB certification as the gold standard in wound, ostomy, and continence nursing. Her clinical practice is firmly grounded in evidence-based care, ethical accountability, and strict adherence to certification standards that prioritize patient safety and quality outcomes. Over the course of her career as a CWOCN in a large academic medical center, Kelly has earned a reputation as a clinician whose judgment, consistency, and expertise reflect the depth of competence expected of WOCNCB-certified nurses.

Kelly's commitment to certification integrity is most evident in her leadership during periods of organizational growth and change. As the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence team expanded from 4 nurses to 12, Kelly played a central role in ensuring that certification standards were not diluted but strengthened. Under her guidance and advocacy, 100% of team members were supported, and expected, to obtain and maintain WOCNCB certification. She successfully championed full institutional financial support, including paid training time, ensuring that future CWOCNs could pursue certification without personal or financial burden. This reinforced a culture in which professional competence and accountability were nonnegotiable. This approach elevated clinical credibility across the institution and ensured consistent, high-quality care for a complex and vulnerable patient population.

In addition, Kelly successfully advocated for compensation structures that appropriately recognize the advanced expertise, responsibility, and certification requirements inherent in CWOCN practice. This advocacy further reinforced the value of WOCNCB certification as a marker of specialized knowledge, professional integrity, and consumer trust.

### **Leadership and Representation of WOCNCB Certification Standards**

Kelly is an exceptional leader who represents WOCNCB certification standards through action, mentorship, and example. As Team Lead for an award-winning Wound, Ostomy, and Continence nursing team, she oversees clinical excellence, professional development, and accountability for 16 certified nurses while remaining actively engaged in direct patient care. Kelly routinely accepts the most complex clinical assignments and serves as a trusted resource for nursing staff, physicians, and interdisciplinary teams across the organization.

Her leadership extends well beyond daily operations. Kelly has established and led multiple internal committees focused on professional recognition, clinical excellence, and certification advancement, including initiatives designed to elevate the visibility and voice of WOCNCB-certified nurses. She has served in numerous shared governance and interdisciplinary leadership roles, consistently representing certification standards in decision-making related to quality, value analysis, and patient safety. Through these efforts, Kelly has ensured that certified WOC nursing expertise informs system-level practice and policy.

Importantly, Kelly does not simply lead a team; she develops certified leaders. Through intentional mentorship, role modeling, and accountability, she has cultivated an environment in which certification excellence is both expected and sustained, creating a pipeline of future WOCNCB-certified nurse leaders.

### **Commitment to Lifelong Learning and Recertification**

Kelly Chapman exemplifies lifelong learning as an ethical obligation of certified practice. She has successfully maintained her WOCNCB certification for more than 20 years, recertifying through both the Professional Growth Program (PGP) and examination pathways. This dual-pathway experience reflects not only her personal dedication, but also a comprehensive understanding of recertification standards and expectations.

Recognizing that certification excellence must be supported structurally, Kelly was instrumental in the development of a clinical ladder for CWOCNs within her organization. This framework promotes continuous professional development, leadership engagement, scholarly activity, and sustained certification participation. Kelly has personally mentored over 25 CWOCNs through initial certification, recertification, exam preparation, and PGP completion, frequently identifying and creating opportunities for colleagues to earn PGP points through quality improvement initiatives, education, and professional service.

Through her mentorship, Kelly ensures that WOCNCB certification is not treated as a one-time achievement, but as a living professional commitment embedded into daily practice and long-term career development.

### **Innovation and Contribution to WOCNCB-Certified Nursing Practice**

Innovation is a defining hallmark of Kelly's career. She has led and contributed to numerous quality improvement initiatives that advance wound, ostomy, and continence nursing practice while producing meaningful improvements in patient outcomes. Her work spans pressure injury prevention, fecal management strategies, ostomy care optimization,

staff education, and system-level process improvement, resulting in measurable gains in care quality and safety. Hospital acquired pressure injuries have decreased from 1308 in 2016 to 109 in 2025.

Kelly's scholarly contributions further extend the reach of her impact. She is a published author in the *Journal of Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing* and has served as a peer reviewer for the journal for more than a decade, directly shaping the quality and dissemination of evidence-based practice within the specialty. Her work has been presented at regional and national conferences, including multiple poster presentations at WOCN Society and Southeast Chapter WOCN conferences, as well as national quality forums. Through these contributions, Kelly advances the collective knowledge base of WOCNCB-certified nursing and reinforces the role of certified nurses as drivers of innovation and excellence.

### **Professional and Organizational Engagement**

Kelly maintains sustained and meaningful engagement in professional and organizational activities that advance wound, ostomy, and continence nursing. She has been an active member of the WOCN Society for over 20 years and currently serves as Secretary of the Central Alabama WOC Nurses Association. Her leadership roles include conference planning, vendor coordination, professional nominations, and regional service, reflecting long-standing dedication to the growth and integrity of the specialty.

She has contributed her expertise as a member of the Hollister Ostomy Clinical Advisory Board and serves on multiple interdisciplinary hospital committees focused on skin integrity, value analysis, and enhanced recovery initiatives. Kelly also engages in community service, including volunteer foot care for individuals experiencing homelessness and long-term support of community resilience initiatives. Notably, she has participated in advocacy efforts that contributed to improved Medicaid coverage for ostomy supplies, directly advancing consumer access to essential care and aligning with the WOCNCB mission to promote safety and quality through certified practice.

### **Conclusion**

Kelly Chapman's career represents the very best of WOCNCB-certified nursing. Her sustained certification integrity, commitment to lifelong learning, leadership in practice and mentorship, and national-level contributions exemplify the mission and values of the WOCNCB®. Through her work, she has strengthened professional standards, elevated consumer safety, and cultivated a culture of certification excellence that will endure across generations of certified nurses.

Kelly does not simply hold WOCNCB certification—she stewards it. She is a model of professional integrity, a trusted leader, and an exceptional ambassador for certified wound, ostomy, and continence nursing. Kelly Chapman is unequivocally deserving of recognition as a WOCNCB Certified Nurse of the Year.