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Full bio of Deb can be found after this article. Deb is a certified occupational health nurse specialist and Faith Community Nurse from Lebanon, Oregon. She retired from full-time employment at SAIF Corporation in Salem, OR in April, 2017 after a long career in safety and health consulting to focus on faith community nursing and health ministry.

Live Longer Lebanon!

God works in mysterious ways. For nearly two decades I yearned to take the Faith Community Nursing Foundations Course. We had an active network of FCNs, called Parish Nurses back then, and I loved what they were doing in the community – what I knew about it, at least. Although we had the week-long course in our area annually, my demanding, very full-time occupational health nursing career, along with my service as an Army Nurse Corps Officer in the Oregon Army National Guard kept me too busy to take it. I always needed time off for self-care, not to take a training related to yet one more thing – one more thing that I likely wouldn't have time to do anyway. I put it on my bucket list.

Fast forward to my retirement date in April, 2017. I retired early for several reasons, not the least of which was to get into some sort of health ministry in my community. East Linn County ranked 31st out of 36 Oregon counties in health behaviors in 2016, and I felt led to help. Many of the health issues manifested as stress and maladaptive coping skills, with substance abuse being primary. We had suffered too many suicides in the spring of 2017. I knew I would be seeking out a Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course, but I wanted to get some sort of health initiative started in our community right away. Lebanon had applied and been accepted to be a [Blue Zones](#) community in early 2017, but the price-tag was too high. I co-led that effort with the Lifestyle Medicine instructor at the Western University of Health Sciences, College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Northwest, a new medical school in Lebanon. We re-branded as Live Longer Lebanon with the support of the community. I moved forward with a different co-lead, loosely following the [Blue Zones Power 9 model](#) for health improvement, starting with schools, with plans to move into the various community sectors, such as faith, worksites, grocery stores, public administration, etc.

We convened a diverse group of energetic community leaders, rolled up our sleeves, and went to work. We began first by connecting with other like-minded groups to avoid redundancy, and developed several efforts aimed at reducing health disparities and improving access to care. I led a school staff training/workshop early in the school year and learned that the biggest obstacle was lack of resources. Staff wanted to bring a rich educational experience to our youth, but they suffered under a heavy administrative load. There was simply too much to do, and staff were under a tremendous amount of stress. What Live Longer Lebanon was doing was not enough, but we could not see a solution.

I was fully immersed in this volunteer health improvement effort when I finally found and enrolled in a Foundations course with a September start date. Much of the curriculum enhanced my skills and improved what I was doing in this secular Live Longer Lebanon movement, and I often shared what I was learning in the Foundations course at our monthly Live Longer Lebanon meetings. When we got to the Foundations lesson that focused on community health and school/church partnerships, I saw this as a way to extend our resources and bring some much-needed love to our youth. I prayerfully put it on the agenda. I showed one of the [Be Undivided](#) video clips, pitched it as a potential solution, and sat in awe as this very secular group enthusiastically embraced the idea. One of our members took the lead and Live Longer

Lebanon and one of our local churches will be hosting a rally this spring to connect area churches with schools in our district.

Meanwhile, I was exploring what had happened to our once-robust Faith Community Nursing network. Rachel Hagfeldt and Clinton Miller had done a remarkable job with the program, but both had moved. The team at Faith Community Nursing/Health Ministries Northwest is helping me find Foundations course graduates in our area, and talks are underway to explore the feasibility of hiring a part time coordinator position within our local health system to rejuvenate this very important initiative in Lebanon. If that doesn't work, we will seek a grant to move the work forward. We are prayerfully watching and waiting for the right path to take.

As I write this, I am headlong into an online Coordinator Course – even though I have nothing yet to coordinate! - and have registered for the Symposium in April in Memphis. I am stepping out in faith. I am thankful to Jonet Schutz, Salem area FCN Coordinator and to Carol Reitz and Annette Stixrud, my Foundations instructors, and to Rachel Hagfeldt – these professionals have inspired me, mentored me, and encouraged me along the way, and continue to do so. Jonet has graciously welcomed me into the fold as one of the Salem area FCNs until we can get our Linn County area network re-established. None of this would have been possible without the prayer covering of our small congregation, Am HaSefer – People of the Book, to ignite the blessing of our Heavenly Father, who is the Master at orchestrating everything we do. Please pray for our efforts to bring love and better health to our Lebanon community.

Deb's Bio

Deb is a certified occupational health nurse specialist and Faith Community Nurse from Lebanon, Oregon. She retired from full-time employment at SAIF Corporation in Salem, OR in April, 2017 after a long career in safety and health consulting to focus on faith community nursing and health ministry.

Deb is a member of Am HaSefer – People of The Book, a Biblical Sabbath-observant congregation in Lebanon, Oregon, and is currently immersed in re-building the Faith Community Nursing network in her community. She founded and co-leads a local health improvement volunteer coalition called Live Longer Lebanon and is the Senior Consultant with Health & Safety Strategies, LLC, specializing in Total Worker Health[®] consulting and training services for local businesses. She has extensive local and national speaking experience, loves teaching, and is passionate about helping to improve the health of her community. Deb is a member of Faith Community Nursing/Health Ministries Northwest, Faith Community Nurses International, and the Health Ministries Association, as well as a member of the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses and the American Society of Safety Engineers. She is a retired Army Nurse Corp Officer, having served in the National Guard in South Dakota and Oregon for a total of 27 years. Deb earned her Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing from South Dakota State University and her Masters' Degree in Public Health from Oregon State University.