

## Don'L Blevins, DNP, Joins Northern Urgent Care

**Don'L "Zack" Blevins**, Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), has joined the clinical team of **Northern Urgent Care**, a division of Northern Regional Hospital that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with non-emergency injuries and conditions. The 35-year-old highly skilled nurse practitioner brings years of emergency/critical-care nursing and EMT experience to his new position.

Blevins believes his career in healthcare was almost pre-ordained since it aligns comfortably with his strong Christian faith and emphatic personality that helps him relate to patients in a positive, trusting manner. "I try to meet my patients where they are at that particular point in their lives, and then take the time needed to share my medical knowledge and recommendations with them," said Blevins. "I enjoy talking with people and believe that patient education is a vital part of my nursing role. I always see my patients as whole individuals; not just another case."

Born on a military base in Louisiana, Blevins was raised and educated in North Carolina when his parents – both U.S. Air Force veterans -- eventually resettled in the Dobson area. Blevins believes he inherited a love of education from his mother, an educator; and his passion for achieving excellence in his work from his father, a successful business owner. After graduating from Surry Central High School, the young Blevins dipped his toes into the construction business. "After doing construction for a couple of years, I decided to go back to school ... and I've never regretted that decision," he laughs.

His pathway to nursing began as a certified EMT-Paramedic with several companies, including Wake County Emergency Medical Services in Raleigh, NC -- the top-ranked EMS agency in the nation for select survival outcomes. "My challenging experiences as an Emergency Medical Technician and then a Paramedic set the foundation for the rest of my career," he says. In addition to developing and fine-tuning basic clinical knowledge and skills, his field experience also gave him some special memories. On two separate occasions, he delivered healthy newborns – both of whom refused to wait for their moms to get to the nearest hospital. "I delivered a baby boy in Surry County while enroute to the

hospital; and, two years later, a baby girl in her home in Raleigh,” he recalls fondly. “You really want your career to mean something – and those surprising, twice-in-a-lifetime deliveries were truly meaningful moments.”

After earning an associate degree in nursing from Excelsior College in 2014, the newly-minted nurse continued his studies at Liberty University – where, three years later, he was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. While advancing his formal studies, he provided care to critically ill patients in the Neuro Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Novant Health Forsyth Medical Center and the Cardiac ICU at Atrium Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. “As a nurse in an ICU setting, you sometimes have a patient who passes away,” he says softly. “And, in those immediate first moments – when your patient’s whole family is in the room and you’re the only person they have a connection with – being able to transfer your focus to the care and comfort of the family is really special. But that’s what we healthcare providers do – we’re there for our patients and families from the first moments of life to the last moments of life ... and all points in between.”

Blevins has also worked as a Critical Care Travel Nurse in various healthcare facilities throughout the Piedmont; and was most recently employed as a Family Nurse Practitioner at Novant Health Extended Care – Surry Medical Associates in Mount Airy, NC.

Blevins is eager to be part of the Northern Urgent Care team, where he will handle a full spectrum of non-emergency conditions and complications – from respiratory ailments to broken bones to surface cuts requiring stitches. “I look forward to assessing, diagnosing, and providing my patients with prompt and compassionate care – with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention,” he says.

In keeping with his Doctor of Nursing Practice studies, Blevins is comfortable with the application of relevant research data to community health programs and, when applicable, to his everyday clinical practice. In early May 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General declared that the latest public health epidemic was loneliness. Several years earlier, though, Blevins had recognized social isolation and loneliness as key drivers of depression and negative clinical outcomes in older adults with chronic medical conditions. Working with faith-based groups, he developed a unique study to measure 30 quality indicators among study

participants. Using digital communications and a faith-based lesson plan, he found that the participants' *perception* of their own health improved significantly. "We used Zoom meetings to get participants together virtually," he explained, "and while Zoom is not a perfect substitute for human interaction, we found it's better than nothing." His study was published recently in the January 2023 edition of the *Journal of Christian Nursing*.

Married nearly 10 years to wife Candace, the active couple has two young children: five-year-old daughter River, and three-year-old son Waylon. "We like to be outside," says Blevins, when describing his family's sense of adventure for camping, fishing, and hiking in some of the more popular areas of the Blue Ridge Mountains and along the Appalachian Trail.

**Northern Urgent Care** is open seven days a week. Walk-ins without an appointment are welcome; and for even greater convenience, you may check-out the wait times online and reserve your place in line – much like call-ahead-seating at restaurants. Call Northern Urgent Care at 336-719-7200 or visit us on-site at 119 Welch Road (in Mount Airy, NC) or online at [choosenorthern.org/hospital-services/urgent-care/](https://choosenorthern.org/hospital-services/urgent-care/)

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