

# Suzanne Baer

landed in school nursing almost by accident. "I have been a nurse for nearly 23 years, with most of my experience working with newborns and their families. I tried a few different avenues, including working for an insurance company in utilization management," said Baer.

That varied background is what helped her realize she was truly geared toward younger population.

"It was all perfect timing. I had a friend who asked me if I had considered school nursing. I thought, 'No, I hadn't thought of that.' I took a minute, went to the web site, and there was a position. I went from never thinking about school nursing on Friday to sending in my resume on Sunday, and thankfully it all worked out."

Baer's experience with children is what eventually inspired her and led her to apply for the position.

Since then, her reward has been seeing the results of helping children in the community every day.

"My favorite thing is doing vision screenings on children. I am in two elementary schools and I sometimes have to send a letter home saying a child failed their vision screening and recommending further examination," she said. "When I see them come back with glasses, it's a thrill. It's a small victory for me but it's a huge gain for the child. Having those new glasses removes barriers to learning. If a child cannot see, they cannot read or see the board."

Baer said she also spends time linking families to resources in the community.

**"We are on the forefront of health for the next generation in our community. Children are in school every day, and we see them on an almost daily basis," said Baer.**

This helps nurses spot potential problems.

"For example, if a student comes to see me with a rash, I can determine if further evaluation is needed by a physician. A rash could be the beginning of a life threatening allergy or could be a highly contagious disease. Someone without a medical background may not realize the potential seriousness of the rash."

She also sees a major difference for children who are learning healthy habits in elementary school.

"I think with kids, the earlier you start, the better it is to teach prevention and healthy lifestyles. I love going into the classroom and hearing children talking about nutrition and exercise," she said. "In doing this, school nurses are able to make a difference long term by helping children grow up healthy and, in doing this, prevent chronic diseases later on in life. We are laying a healthy foundation for life."



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**Suzanne Baer is #makinglivingbetter every day in Catawba County.**