In February, 23-year-old SC nursing student Ariana Delucchi applied to Sharp Memorial Hospital. In March all Hell broke loose. Delucchi was informed that the unit she was hired to work in had been frantically converted into a COVID-19 overflow ICU. She was given two options: to join the front lines of the novel coronavirus war or to wait until COVID-19 passed over. Delucchi immediately joined.

It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, she said, a great time to start working in medicine. It was also a rare chance for a young medical professional to make an instant impact during an international crisis.

“I was excited for (the opportunity) and to get my foot in the door to start building my foundation so I could become a good nursing assistant and eventually a really good nurse,” she said.

Her colleagues insist that Delucchi is officially “a really good nursing assistant” with a brilliant future.

Lexie Volquez, a nurse at Sharp Memorial Hospital, said Delucchi has become a battle-worn front-line warrior against the plague of the 21st century at a tender age. She has already assumed many of the responsibilities typical nursing students may not be trusted with for years.

Delucchi said she was introduced to the world of nursing when she was 10. Her aunt had Stage 4 melanoma and she would visit her at the hospital every day after school. She was deeply moved by the devotion of the nurses, she said.

“They were smart, kind, loving, compassionate, empathetic — just all things amazing,” she said. “And I know that the situation was pretty terrible, but they took really good care of her and took really good care of my family.”

Delucchi said she wanted to be like them.

Volquez said she is.

Chula Vista and the South County have been a COVID-19 hotspot since the spring, but Volquez said the tsunami of patients started slowly. In

BY ANA PAOLA OLVERA | Staff Writer

“Arianna’s got a wisdom about her that doesn’t correlate with her age. I expect great things from her.”

Valerie Pennington
SC Biology Professor

“SC student battles a pandemic in an overwhelmed COVID ward

Ariana Delucchi
logged more than 2,000 hours at the Sharp Memorial Hospital COVID ward in Chula Vista.

“This experience makes me want to be a nurse even more, so that I am able to help people even more than I am now.”

Ariana Delucchi
SC Nursing Major
Nurse: SC student volunteers to serve overwhelmed Chula Vista COVID ward

Biological science goes only so far to prepare one to be an essential skill of a great nurse, Delucchi said, and she tries to find ways to help provide little help.

One of Delucchi’s patients had been hospitalized for several days and thought he would be going home until he got bad news—his oxygen levels slipped and he needed to stay at least one more night. The news was devastating, communicated by talking to him about dogs.

He told her funny stories about his sister’s boyfriend’s dog and he told her about how his wife had sent him a bag full of his dog’s hair. They laughed and he thanked her, saying that even though he was disappointed, she had made him feel a little bit better.

Sometimes a nurse needs to calm a patient when stress can add fuel to a bad situation. Lack of oxygen is a primary fear for many COVID-19 patients, Delucchi said. Some run out of breath simply trying to speak.

Monique Luna

Julia Woock was very happy when she learned she had been selected as Editor-in-Chief of the Southwestern College Sun in June 2020. Then, there was the realization: “How are we going to do this?” she asked.

Working from home, she and her team published print newspapers while most colleges and universities settled for online publications.

In February 2020 few saw it coming. Almost no American reported a virus that originated (across the world) “(It was unnerving) just to think that this virus that originated in three countries. Some were never heard from again. There was a moment when the virus was national and a collective fear was felt. The virus terrified us, it terrified everyone. Now we are scared for COVID-19 patients. They are the face of COVID-19.”

Our Sun Publishing

She watched as a patient’s oxygen levels slipped and he needed to go down in the South County, responding to their oxygen therapy.

Monique Luna

Each evening by putting on her hospital issued scrubs and Personal Protection Equipment (face shields, masks and gloves). Nunez receives her patient’s reports before leaving out to visit each patient and ask if they need anything. She then serves her patients, bath, shave and eat and walk around their rooms.

This is a difficult job with an already crowded workplace.

Nurse: SC student volunteers to serve overwhelmed Chula Vista COVID ward

Student paper named one of century’s best 100 publications

WRITER BY NICOLETTA MONIQUE LUNA

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When patients infected with the novel coronavirus arrive at the hospital, she said, everyone on staff needs for them and they do everything in their power to help. It is traumatizing when they die, she said, and it is not going to get easier. Nurses have to help desperate people to go down in the South County, responding to their oxygen therapy.

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