

I've been a firefighter/paramedic for 13 years, and for the last 6 years I have also worked as a paramedic tech in the ER. My whole life has been focused on emergency medicine, and I felt that the natural progression would be to go into nursing. I thought about going on for my baccalaureate degree in fire science, but that only prepares you to be a fire chief. I would miss not being in the front lines. I like being first in—not knowing what to expect.

But isn't it unnerving to always approach the unknown?

None of us really feels that way. It's a huge adrenaline rush, but you also have the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped someone. You're the first one there and you're the one making decisions. When you walk in the door, people look at you and say, "I'm so glad you're here. Please help me." And then you go to work.

I also like the fast-paced setting of the ER, so I'll continue there as a nurse. I like thinking on my feet and making decisions.

In any of your roles, as a firefighter, paramedic, or nurse, have you ever considered your actions to be heroic?

No. It's my job. Somebody's got to do it, even though a lot of people tell me they couldn't do my job. There is never a day when I say that I don't want to go to work. A lieutenant at the fire station likes to say that if you really like your job, you'll never work another day in your life. You'll have so much fun that it's not considered work.

Do you think you've made the right choices regarding your career?

When I was growing up, I knew that I wanted to do something with my life. When I first came to this country and was interviewing for different jobs, I met an employer who asked me what I wanted out of life. I told him that I wanted my daughter to be proud of me. I wanted my daughter to grow up and say, "My dad is...this."