

Foreign-born nurses grateful for bounty, freedoms found in U.S.

Leftover turkey isn't the only thing with shelf life as we emerge from the holiday weekend.

It's not too late to savor some notebook leftovers with a Thanksgiving flavor.

These are notes that didn't make it into The Columbian's story about foreign-born nurses that ran on Saturday.

The immigrant nurses — including some Clark County residents — were able to return to their careers through a partnership that includes Clackamas

Community College, Clark College and Washington State University Vancouver.

Judy Anderson, director of the Workforce Improvement with Immigrant Nurses program, said her students bring an interesting perspective. One summed it up nicely.

"She said, 'Judy, do people here understand what they have? Here, you have a choice of what you want for breakfast. In my country, we have to decide if we want to eat or if we want

our children to eat.'"

Even with a good career as a nurse, that woman still isn't making breakfast choices.

"She doesn't eat breakfast. She saves the money and sends it to her son in Africa," Anderson said.

Don't ask, don't die

Another nurse came here from Ethiopia. While working as a certified nursing assistant, he upgraded his credentials through the WIIN program.

"When he got his first check as a registered nurse, he said, 'There is

something wrong. I'll have to return it. It's too much,'" Anderson said. "He was told, that's what you're making now."

Even though the money can be life-changing, some students know it isn't the most significant part of their move to this country. It was a lifesaving move for that Ethiopian when friends hustled him out of his homeland.

He went into the Ethiopian army after nursing school, and became a medic, providing care for about 2,000 soldiers.

Although the conflict didn't get much attention in this country, Ethiopia was engaged in a border war

a decade ago with Eritrea. Tens of thousands of people were killed.

That medic realized that he didn't know why he was patching up bullet holes. According to Anderson, he asked somebody, "Why are we fighting in Eritrea, anyway?"

"A general heard about it," Anderson said, "and sent him to the front lines to die."

Off Beat
NOT QUITE the NEWS

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