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<td>Ms. Amber Dawn Halcomb, Mrs. Kristen R. Karcher, Mr. Wesley E. Karcher</td>
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Dear Alumni and Friends,

I am honored to begin my tenure as dean of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, College of Nursing. This magazine will provide you a small glimpse of the amazing things I see happening in the college on a daily basis! In this issue, you will learn about the discovery of nursing knowledge that helps clients and their families prevent illness and restore health; the service outreach to improve health in our community, the nation, and the world; and the effectiveness of our educational programs. The overriding strength of our educational programs, research endeavors, and clinical services lies in the talented and dedicated faculty members and students of the College of Nursing.

As we look forward to another productive year, we rely on the strong support from our alumni and friends to continue advancing the college. We are so fortunate to have an esteemed advisory board, which plays a key role in helping the college improve and thrive. I want to take this opportunity to thank each of them for their continued service to the College of Nursing.

I would also like to invite you to submit a nomination for the Dr. Sylvia E. Hart Distinguished Alumni of the Year Award, presented to one outstanding graduate each fall. Letters of nominations can be sent to me at vniederh@utk.edu or to 1200 Volunteer Boulevard, Knoxville, TN 37996, before February 1, 2012.

Warm Regards,

Victoria Niederhauser, DrPH, RN
Dean and Professor
On the Cover: BSN student Amy Renner bonds with an infant during the college’s international trip to Peru.

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MEET THE NEW DEAN
VICTORIA NIEDERHAUSER EMBRACES COLLEGE OF NURSING LEADERSHIP

"Leading the college to explore innovative ways to address these issues energizes me."

Vision for the College
Victoria Niederhauser takes the lead for the College of Nursing
The College of Nursing entered a new era of leadership with the arrival of the college’s fourth dean, Victoria Niederhauser. Niederhauser came to UT from the University of Hawaii, where she was associate dean for academic affairs at the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene.

“As the state’s flagship university, our nursing program plays a key role in the healthcare industry in Tennessee and our nation,” said Susan Martin, provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs at UT Knoxville. “As we face the challenges of an ever-changing healthcare industry, Niederhauser will provide the kind of leadership we need to further evolve the college’s role, as well as our service to the state.”

A Fairfield, Connecticut, native, Niederhauser served as director of nurse practitioner programs, graduate chair, department chair, and associate dean during her eleven years at UH. Prior to that, she was a nursing faculty member at George Washington and George Mason universities.

Niederhauser’s own research focuses on child and adolescent health promotion and disease prevention, with an emphasis on immunizations and childhood obesity. Niederhauser published the book Core Review for Pediatric Primary Care Nurse Practitioners in 2007 and has authored more than thirty-five articles and book chapters on child health and educational issues.

In the last seven years, she received nursing research and training grants of more than $3.4 million. She is a board certified pediatric nurse practitioner and, in 2006, received the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners State Award for Excellence.

Niederhauser earned a doctorate in public health from UH, a master’s degree in nursing from Boston College, a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of Massachusetts, and a diploma from Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing.

A Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow, Niederhauser replaced Joan Creasia, who retired after nearly sixteen years as dean.

After spending more than ten years at the University of Hawaii, what motivated you to accept the position of dean of the College of Nursing?
The College of Nursing is a great school with a great foundation, and the three-fold mission of education, research, and service was very appealing to me. The college has outstanding student outcomes—nearly every student passes national examinations at both the baccalaureate and master’s levels—and faculty members are doing cutting-edge research in the areas of genetics, mental health, aging, health policy, child health, and technology.

This position aligned well with my personal and professional experiences and skills. Living and working in Hawaii for the past thirteen years provided me a good foundation in academic leadership at a large, research-intensive public university, serving a very diverse and rural population.

Health indicators in the state of Tennessee, particularly in the rural areas, are alarming. In 2010, Tennessee had the fourth highest infant mortality rate and ranked second in adult obesity in the nation. Chronic disease, resulting from the obesity epidemic and other unhealthy behaviors, were also among the highest in the nation. These health issues are complicated by a shortage of healthcare providers.

I believe the College of Nursing has a role to play in helping to turn around the health indicators for the state and the nation. Leading the college to explore innovative ways to address these issues energizes me. In addition, I saw many opportunities to continue to steer the school forward with the research agenda and increase support and funding to make headway in improving critical health issues.

The impending nursing shortage, coupled with the growing demands for care and services, will require nurse leaders and nurse educators to develop innovative, efficient, and accessible ways to educate additional nurses to serve clients and families. New strategies to streamline nursing education, create nursing faculty incentives, build win-win academic-practice partnerships, and explore non-traditional educational programs are imperative to the expansion of the nursing profession. It is a very exciting time to be in nursing academics and I believe that UT Knoxville is situated in an ideal place to be on the forefront of these initiatives.

Describe your personal philosophy and how it has helped you to achieve your own personal goals, as well as how it will help you in your new position.

I have been a nurse for more than thirty years, an advanced practice pediatric nurse practitioner for twenty-four years, and a nurse educator since the late 1980s. For me, nursing has never been just a job; it is an integral part of my life. The foundation for my academic nursing philosophy is based on the concepts of servant leadership, respect and caring, collegial interdisciplinary engagement, life-long learning, and knowledge generation and application. These five principles are the compass that provides me insight and direction in the academic nursing environment.

The core of the nursing profession is to serve others, and the philosophy of servant leadership inspires me to encourage and support the growth and development of faculty members, staff, and students. Academic nursing programs have the unique capability to serve the community through academic-practice-community partnerships, and I believe these relationships foster academic excellence. It is essential to build and maintain a respectful and caring environment in the academic setting. People are the greatest asset to any organization. Having the ability to seek out strengths in all people and motivate them by creating a positive, dynamic, and energetic work environment is critical to good leadership.

I believe learning is a lifelong process. It is essential to grow, develop, and instill a passion for continual learning and improvement in others. Nurses have the ability and the responsibility to generate new knowledge, translate knowledge into nursing education and practice, and use knowledge to decrease health disparities, promote health, prevent diseases, and improve outcomes.
What opportunities do you see for the College of Nursing?

I believe there is a wealth of opportunity for the college to lead the state and nation in the areas of nursing and health research, interdisciplinary education, international outreach, and nursing practice.

With the 2010 publication of *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, outlining priorities for nursing education, leadership, and practice, and national nursing research priorities, like the National Institute of Nursing Research Areas of Research Emphasis, there is an enormous responsibility for nursing scientists to generate and translate nursing and health knowledge.

Faculty members at the College of Nursing are doing cutting-edge research in many areas. My job as dean is to provide faculty members with the support they need to advance the research agenda through funding at the national level; building of interdisciplinary research opportunities; and creating innovative solutions for health promotion, disease prevention, and illness management.

Never in the history of the nursing profession has there been such an opportunity for nurses to play a key role in transforming health care and improving health. Registered nurses alone constitute approximately 23 percent of the entire healthcare workforce—the largest portion among all healthcare workers. Healthcare reform, with its emphasis on wellness and prevention, challenges our profession to find innovative and effective ways to provide seamless, affordable, quality care that will produce improved health outcomes.

The College of Nursing works with other colleges on campus, including Engineering; Architecture; Law; and Education, Health, and Human Sciences. My hope is that interdisciplinary education throughout the College of Nursing will be the norm and that we are able to train our undergraduate and graduate nursing students side-by-side with other health- and non-health-related disciplines.

There is an opportunity to continue to build upon the foundation of international service and education. The faculty and students have participated in medical missions to Ghana, Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Peru. Building upon this foundation of service, we will begin to explore how the college can continue having a significant impact on health and research throughout the world. I believe we should focus our international efforts on making a long-term investment in health and well-being communities. In addition, we will explore collaborative research and faculty and student exchange ventures with international partners.

What are some of the challenges that the college faces today?

As with all public educational institutions, the College of Nursing needs to look toward a sustainable model that does not rely heavily on public funding. I believe the tough economic climate is an opportunity to explore innovative ways to grow our educational programs, foster our community outreach, improve our resources, and cultivate our research agenda. This will require us to set aside some traditional ways of doing our work and take risks with new ideas.

We have tremendous support from our advisory board members and faculty to help raise funds to support student scholarships and faculty development. We need to continue to build alumni and friends of the college support through the donation of gifts, time, and talent. We will look at ideas to connect more with our community, through continuing education and other programs that can provide resources directly to the college.

What is the focus of your research and scholarly work?

The focus of my scholarly activities are in the area of child and adolescent health promotion and disease prevention, with an emphasis on immunizations and childhood obesity. My motivation to work in these important areas stem from my passion to help children and their families be healthy and stay healthy. I have received several grants to study parental barriers to childhood immunizations and have published extensively in this area.

Over the last five years, I have been validating the “Searching for Hardship and Obstacles to Shots” survey to identify parental barriers to childhood immunizations (www.shotsurvey.org). Through this work, I discovered that parents face three types of barriers that interfere with getting child immunizations: access to the vaccines, concerns about the vaccines, and feeling vaccines are not important for child health. I am currently completing a randomized controlled pilot study, “Vaccines4Kids,” to test the impact of text messaging reminders on childhood immunization rates.

When you have time away from the job, what do you like to do?

In my free time, I look forward to spending time with my husband and three children. I also enjoy being outside and active, and especially like to run, hike, and garden.
GLOBAL DISASTER NURSING

When disaster strikes, nurses are on the front lines. Yet, few educational programs offer nurses comprehensive training to lead in disaster situations worldwide.

The College of Nursing has established a new Global Disaster Nursing program, which will train nurses to respond to emergencies anywhere in the world. The program will offer one-of-a-kind global disaster training for nurses earning advanced nursing degrees.

The program is being funded by a three-year, $775,850 grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services. Classes will begin in January 2012.

In 2005, the College of Nursing blazed a trail with the Homeland Security Nursing program, attracting hundreds of applicants and garnering national media attention for its unique program. The Global Disaster Nursing program is an outgrowth of the earlier program, offering a more comprehensive curriculum to broadly prepare nurses for disasters on a global scale.

“This program will play a vital role in contributing to global health in the twenty-first century,” Dean Victoria Niederhauser said. “Nurses assume a key leadership role in emergency preparedness and response. This program expands leadership by providing advanced training and real-life experiences in response, recovery, and restoration of health during natural and man-made disasters.”

The Global Disaster Nursing program will address a largely unmet need in public health. It will prepare nurse leaders, managers, and advanced practice nurses to plan for mass-casualty disasters, effectively manage logistics of an event in progress, work cooperatively with government officials and responders, and provide direct patient care to victims of trauma or catastrophic events.

Susan Speraw, director of the program, said nurses have been on the forefront of patient care since the days of Florence Nightingale.

“Nurses are well-poised to respond to disasters. Their basic nursing education prepares them to deal with the unexpected,” she said. “They are also the perfect people to put into leadership positions.”

Integral to the new program will be field experience, which includes either going abroad or working with an agency that responds to humanitarian needs in under-resourced areas. New course content will also train nurses in tropical medicine and infectious diseases.

Featuring internships with local, state, and federal agencies, simulation exercises, and work with disaster relief agencies, the program will offer master’s and doctoral degrees. A post-master’s certificate will also be available for nurses who already hold an advanced degree and want to obtain new skills in this specialized field.

For additional information, please contact Susan Speraw at 865-974-7586, or visit the college website at http://nursing.utk.edu.
First Accelerated BSN Cohort

The college welcomed its first class of Accelerated BSN students this fall. The program offers individuals with non-nursing degrees an opportunity to complete a nursing program in just twelve months.

Sixteen students began the highly competitive program this year. They were selected from a pool of more than ninety applicants and are a diverse mix of recent graduates looking to start careers and experienced professionals seeking new ones.

The inaugural class ranges in age from twenty-two to fifty. All are Tennessee residents. The students graduated from nine different undergraduate institutions and hold degrees in areas such as agriculture, business, communications, natural sciences, and social sciences.

The Accelerated BSN is a twelve-month accelerated, not abbreviated, program. For those with the right balance of intellectual ability, time management skills, emotional fortitude, and personal and financial support, the program is the ideal entry into practice.

The Helene Fuld Trust, the nation’s largest private foundation devoted to student nurses and nursing education, awarded the College of Nursing a $600,000 grant to support the Accelerated BSN program of study. This grant provided scholarships to assist students in making a career transition to nursing.

BSN Class of 2015

The College of Nursing’s freshman class is among the best and the brightest on campus.

Starting in 2009, the college began offering admission to the BSN program to incoming freshmen. Since admitting that first freshman class, the academic profile of our incoming students has been on the rise.

This year’s class comprises more than 100 students, with a 4.11 average high-school GPA and a 27.5 average ACT score. Ten of our freshman students were selected for the prestigious Chancellor’s Honors Program.

Ninety percent of our freshmen are Tennessee residents, representing sixty-eight high schools across the state. Ten percent of the class received a Tennessee Pledge Scholarship, awarded on the basis of extreme financial need. All in-state students in the BSN Class of 2015 hold a Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship.

Of the nine undergraduate colleges at UT Knoxville, the College of Nursing’s freshman class held the top average GPA and the second-highest average ACT score. The strong academic profile of our students ensures that the future of nursing is in good hands.

Doctor of Nursing Practice Program Established

The college has a new option for nursing students who wish to further their education.

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program elevates nursing to a level comparable with other practice doctoral health professionals. The full-time program is designed for licensed nurses with master’s degrees, who wish to pursue a clinical doctoral degree.

The program is primarily online, requiring minimal on-campus time each semester.

The DNP degree differs from the existing PhD program in that it has a clinical, rather than research focus. The PhD program will continue as a research-focused degree.

The goal of the new program is to prepare expert clinicians to provide advanced nursing care in a variety of settings, be leaders in improving the healthcare system, and educate future nurses. The DNP program will help increase the number of doctoral degrees granted by the university, which is one of UT Knoxville’s goals in its quest to become a top twenty-five public research university.

The addition of this program also aligns the university with anticipated changes in accreditation. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing will require the educational preparation of advanced practice nurses exist at the doctoral level beginning in 2015.

“The initiation of this program allows our graduates to be prepared at the highest level of clinical expertise and leadership capabilities well in advance of this new requirement,” DNP Program Chair Peggy Pierce said.

Faculty Member Honored for Advocacy Efforts

Carole R. Myers, assistant professor of nursing and co-director of UT Knoxville’s Center for Health Policy and Services Research, received the Nurse Practitioner...
Advocate State Award for Excellence by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners at their annual conference in June 2011. Additionally, Myers was selected to participate in the American Nurses Advocacy Institute, a yearlong mentorship experience, during which she will work closely with Sharon Adkins, RN, MSN, Executive Director of the Tennessee Nurses Association, to develop a plan to increase policy advocacy among Tennessee nurses.

**College Welcomes Two New Faculty Members**

Sadie P. Hutson received her BSN from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her MSN and PhD in Nursing from the University of Pennsylvania. Hutson is a board-certified Women's Health Nurse Practitioner. Prior to coming to UT, Hutson held a tenure-track faculty position at East Tennessee State University, where she was an assistant professor and coordinator of the online and blended PhD program. Her research interests include the study of psychosocial oncology, including cancer disparities among rural and underserved populations, as well as clinical cancer genetics. She is an active member of the Oncology Nursing Society, the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, and Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society. Hutson has published her research in a variety of peer-reviewed journals and has presented at national and international conferences. She is also on the editorial board of the American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine and serves as an adjunct scientist in the Clinical Genetics Branch of the National Cancer Institute. Hutson is teaching research methods to undergraduate and master’s degree students.

Lisa C. Lindley holds a PhD in Nursing from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a health services and policy researcher, her research interests focus on organizations that provide end-of-life care for children. Lindley’s dissertation, *Providing Hospice Care for Children: An Organizational Study*, explored institutional, resource, organizational, and market factors that influence whether community-based hospices offered care for children. She is an active member of Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association, Academy Health, and National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization. Lindley has authored and co-authored several healthcare manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals and has presented her research at national conferences. Lindley is co-teaching graduate courses in healthcare economics and nursing administration.

**Exchange Program Established with Scottish University**

The College of Nursing and Robert Gordon University’s School of Nursing and Midwifery in Aberdeen, Scotland, have developed an exchange program for undergraduate nursing students. The program will begin in the summer of 2012, with four UT and four RGU rising seniors. Students from the two universities will spend eight weeks together—four at UT and four on the RGU campus. Students will be involved in direct patient care and will attend discussion groups led by healthcare experts. One of the main objectives of the exchange is to expose students to the health-delivery systems in the two countries.

Robert Gordon University was named “Scottish University of the Year (2011)” by *The Sunday Times* and “Best Modern University in the UK (2011)” by the *Guardian*. It also carries the distinction of “First in Scotland and Second Across the UK for Graduate-level Jobs (2011)” by the *Times* and “Top Modern University for Research in Scotland (2008)” by RAE.

Gary Ramsey, College of Nursing undergraduate program chair, visited RGU in May 2011, where he met with Professor Brian Webster, head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Ramsey spent time with school faculty and visited clinical facilities in Aberdeen. The exchange program has great potential for growth, including the possibility of more students and faculty-led course exchanges in the future.

**Expert Researcher Gives Mary T. Boynton Lecture**

Faculty, graduate students, and area nurses and administrators had the opportunity to learn from a world-renowned expert during the annual Mary T. Boynton Distinguished Lecture. This year’s distinguished lecturer, Merle Mishel, engaged the audience with her presentation, “Uncertainty in Illness,” on November 16, 2010.

Mishel, the Kenan Professor of Nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing, emphasized that individual patient uncertainty must be understood as a problematic characteristic of the experience of illness, regardless of the acute or chronic nature of various diseases. Mishel is known for her research on individual patient uncertainty and its management in chronic and life-threatening illness. She has expertise in psychosocial responses to cancer and chronic illness, as well as interventions to manage uncertainty. Her Mishel Uncertainty in Illness Scale is used throughout the world. Mishel has a master’s degree in psychiatric nursing and a PhD in social psychology. Recently, she was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame.

The annual nursing scholar visit, which became the Mary T. Boynton Distinguished Lecture Series in 1992, began with the opening of the PhD program in the College of Nursing in 1989. Mary T. Boynton, retired college faculty, has been an instrumental leader in nursing.

Continued on next page
education at UT. With her generous support of the lecture series, she has continued a legacy of education for years to come, through visits from nationally and internationally accomplished scholars, researchers, and practitioners.

Diana Whaley Recognized by Alumni Association

The UT Knoxville Alumni Association’s Board of Directors selected College of Nursing alumnus Diana Whaley as a recipient of the Alumni Professional Achievement Award. Chancellor Jimmy Cheek presented Whaley with the honor at an awards dinner during the Fall 2011 Alumni Board Weekend.

The award recognizes alumni who have achieved a high level of success in their chosen field of endeavor. The trademark of this recipient is a record of notable career accomplishments and a history of outstanding contributions to their profession. The award is presented to acknowledge their success, which brings honor and credit to the University of Tennessee.

Whaley, a 1996 graduate of the college, was the recipient of the 2009 Florence Nightingale award, the highest international honor for the nursing profession. In her career, Whaley has worked with twenty-four national and international disaster response teams. Whaley was a responder to major disasters including the September 11 terrorist attack in New York City, Hurricane Katrina, and the Haiti earthquake. She has been involved with more than fourteen missions to Haiti, providing support in Port-au-Prince and other remote areas of the country. She also serves as the American Red Cross Nurse Liaison for Tennessee.

Congratulations to Diana Whaley for this well-deserved honor.

2010 and 2011 Distinguished Alumni of the Year

Three graduates honored for their service and commitment to the College of Nursing

Each Year, the College of Nursing presents the Dr. Sylvia E. Hart Distinguished Alumni Award to outstanding graduates who have achieved a high level of distinction in the nursing profession and in service to the college. The award is named in honor of the college’s founding dean, whose dedication and commitment to the college made it the excellent academic institution it is today.

Joe Emert (BSN ’78) received the award in 2010. Emert serves as a member of the College of Nursing’s Board of Visitors and is a former member of the Chancellor’s Associates. He was also the recipient of the Accomplished Alumni Award in 2010. Emert is president of First Choice Medical in Maryville, Tennessee. He and his wife, Cindy, have established the Clariece Stewart Emert and Betty Simpson Papp Endowment for Intercultural Healthcare Opportunities in the College of Nursing. The endowment enables students to enrich their education through international and intercultural experiences.

Joan Creasia (MSN ’78) also received the award in 2010. Creasia recently retired as dean of the College of Nursing. She began her higher education career as an instructor at the College of Nursing in 1974 and returned as the dean in 1995. Under her leadership, the college enjoyed significant growth and success. Of the many accomplishments during her tenure, Creasia lead the establishment of the Nurse Anesthesia program and scholarship awards expanded from $30,000 to more than $190,000.

Nancy Schulz (BSN ’77) is the 2011 honoree. Schultz and her husband, Dick, own and manage The Oaks Golf Course in Covington, Georgia. In addition to her duties as the comptroller for business, she is a part-time certified family nurse practitioner with the Newton County Health Department. Schulz has worked more than thirty years as a nurse practitioner in Tennessee and Georgia, predominately in community health settings. Since moving to Newton County Georgia in 1992, she has been an active community servant, having been awarded YMCA Volunteer of the Year in 1999 and elected to serve as county commissioner in 2008.
Faculty Research

As THE UNIVERSITY POSITIONS ITSELF to become a top-twenty-five public research institution, College of Nursing faculty continue to expand scholarship activities, leading research efforts that advance health care and make a difference in the nursing field.

College faculty members are involved in research programs and projects that contribute to knowledge and understanding of health-related problems and improve the health of our society. Their work is featured in scholarly publications and presented at regional, national, and international conferences.

New faculty member Sadie Hutson’s research on HPV and cervical cancer has taken her to rural Appalachia to assess the risk of cancer among underserved young females. Research conducted by Linda Mefford will help to improve the health of infants born prematurely. Tami Wyatt’s Okay With Asthma project is an educational program that helps children learn to manage and cope with their asthma.

These are just a few of the many faculty research projects that are making a difference. For a complete list of research efforts, visit http://nursing.utk.edu/research/report.aspx.

Undergraduate Research

One benefit of attending a top public research institution is the opportunity students have to reach beyond the classroom and pursue original research and creative projects. The College of Nursing prides itself on the opportunities it provides undergraduate students to engage in research activities.

In spring 2011, more than forty BSN seniors participated in the Office of Research’s Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement (EURéCA) competition. In all, twelve projects were entered into the nursing category, some the culmination of two semesters’ work. A faculty mentor guided each student project.


BSN students presenting their research at EURéCA
It WAS AN EVENING OF GOOD FOOD and drink, hundreds of auction items, and the company of Barbara Dooley at the College of Nursing’s third-annual NightinGala.

This year’s NightinGala welcomed more than 240 alumni and friends to Knoxville’s The Foundry on October 28, 2011. The event raised more than $70,000 for the college. Funds from NightinGala support the college’s programs and help the university continue to meet the growing need for nurses.

“We are humbled by the support of our community, our board of advisors, and our nursing practice partners, who are committed to helping raise funds for academic support and student scholarships,” Dean Victoria Niederhauser said. “This event is vital to advancing our college’s future.”

Barbara Dooley, mother of UT football coach Derek Dooley, entertained the audience with her unforgottably amusing stories of being the wife and mother of SEC football coaches. Robin Wilhoit, co-anchor of WBIR’s Action 10 News, served as emcee.

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2012 NightinGala will be held SEPTEMBER 21, 2012. Join us in celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the College of Nursing.
Thank you to our Sponsors!

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Thanks to the generosity of our donors, more than $270,000 in scholarships was awarded to UT nursing students for the 2011–2012 academic year.

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The Wilkinson Nursing Fund
Following a Dream

It has always been Dajana McNabb’s dream to pursue a career in health care. Now, through the College of Nursing’s new Accelerated BSN program and the Helene Fuld Trust Scholarship, McNabb is less than a year away from a long sought-after degree in nursing.

McNabb was born in Bosnia, a republic of the former Yugoslavia, the daughter of a Serb and a Croatian. Being of mixed nationalities in a country so defined by ethnicity, her family struggled to overcome poverty and prejudice.

At a young age, McNabb wanted to become a doctor, a dream her parents did not support. In eighth grade, when Bosnian students are required to select a trade school, she went against her parents’ wishes and enrolled in a school for nursing.

After two years, her education was cut short by civil war. The war in Bosnia caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, displaced more than 2.2 million people, and forced McNabb and her family to evacuate to Germany.

There, McNabb again pursued her dream, completing a vocational nursing program in geriatrics and taking a position at a nursing home.

“I really enjoyed the job,” McNabb said. “I learned a lot about nursing care, but I also learned much about history. Most of the residents were survivors of World War II. I was able to hear their stories, and I developed an understanding of the caring and compassion it takes to be a successful nurse and what an impact that care can make.”

McNabb met and married Charlie, a first sergeant in the US Army. Her goal of earning a degree in nursing was stalled again, this time by numerous moves, deployments, and a desire to have a family.

McNabb completed her bachelor’s degree in psychology through an academic program provided to military families. She received the Molly Pitcher Award in 2005, in recognition of her work assisting military families from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Through all these successes, her goal still remained.

Last year, McNabb learned of the college’s new Accelerated BSN program. The intense, twelve-month track, coupled with the fact that her husband’s family lives in nearby Newport, Tennessee, made for a good fit. And last spring, she was one of sixteen students selected for the highly competitive program.

Though thousands of miles away from her husband and three children in Germany, McNabb now has the opportunity to receive that elusive nursing degree.

That opportunity is due, in large part, to the Helene Fuld Trust Scholarship, which provides funds to assist students with non-nursing baccalaureate degrees complete nursing degrees.

“We did, financially, plan for me to return to school, but things don’t always go according to plan,” McNabb said. “This scholarship has been so important to me and to my family. It has taken much stress off of me and my family, so that I can focus on my education.”

McNabb plans to work for a few years after graduation before returning to school to obtain a graduate degree in nursing. She would like to use her degree in nursing in a community-health setting.

“Giving back to the community is so important to me.”
Students and faculty from the College of Nursing volunteered their time during spring break to provide care for people almost 3,000 miles away from the UT campus. Ten students and two faculty members embarked on a twelve-day adventure to Iquitos, Peru, a city on the edge of the Amazon River.

The experience began in Peru’s capital, Lima, where students met with a local physician to learn about tropical medicine and took a quick course in medical Spanish. From Lima, they boarded a plane to Iquitos, where students joined with local physicians and healthcare providers to set up health clinics in the city’s schools and churches.

During the visit, every service, ranging from tropical medical care to general health screenings, was provided free of charge. Students, faculty, alumni, and community partners donated the supplies and medications used on the trip—in addition to their personal belongings, each student carried with them more than fifty pounds of supplies to support their time in Peru.

College of Nursing students conducted head-to-toe physical exams at a special-needs school in Iquitos and used donations to drastically assist in the daily lives of two children. One five-year-old boy suffered from a neurological disorder, which prevented him from walking. Though he had the use of a walker at school, his family did not have the means to purchase a walker for use at home. A donation from alumna Jenny Beth Jordan (BSN ’10) enabled students to purchase him a walker. Another young boy, who would be considered legally blind in the United States, had no glasses to help him see. A Knoxville-area church donation allowed the nursing students to provide for an eye exam and purchase glasses.

In addition to the local clinics, students also made community-based visits to people who needed care, but were unable to travel. The students provided health education, from
the preparation of clean drinking water to the promotion of breast-feeding, to local residents. They also toured the local hospital to learn about Peru's healthcare delivery system.

Students also immersed themselves in the culture of the indigenous tribes of the area. To reach the remote village locations, students traveled up the Amazon in a boat known as a "tut-tut." At the tribal villages, students learned about customs and traditions and were interacted with the tribal people.

“This international healthcare experience really helps the students understand different cultures and how to effectively interact with people of cultures unfamiliar to them,” faculty member Karen Lasater said. “While this experience focused on the people of Peru, the knowledge gained by the students about adapting to different cultures and respecting new ideas will be with them for life. It also provided an opportunity for students to improve assessment skills and clinical judgment without the technology available to them in US health facilities.”

READY FOR THE WORLD

Experiencing life in a different country is an exciting, life-changing opportunity for students to broaden their world view and help them succeed in today's global society. Here are first-hand accounts from students in the College of Nursing who embarked on adventures they will never forget.

Amy Renner
Senior, Morristown, TN
International Trip to Peru

I WAS INTRODUCED TO THE ANNUAL NURSING mission trip abroad during an interest meeting my junior year. From that moment forward, I was determined to travel with the college to Iquitos, Peru. Beginning in January, we had weekly group meetings to prepare for the trip, and before I knew it, we were heading to Atlanta to catch our flight to Lima.

We landed in Peru and hit the ground running. Within twenty-four hours we were in Iquitos, preparing for our clinic the next day. We spent the entire week in Iquitos providing care to...
Lasater is planning the upcoming international healthcare trip to Costa Rica. The college is hoping to expand the program from ten to twenty-four students, to provide more services abroad and to give more students the opportunity to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

If you would like to contribute to the international healthcare mission, please contact Debby Powell at dpowell6@utk.edu.

The experiences I had while in Peru gave me invaluable learning experiences that will inevitably assist me in my nursing career. This opportunity allowed me to truly experience another culture and appreciate the healthcare system we have in place in America. The education of nurses, accessibility to care and medicine are things we take for granted. As a nurse, humility is something we must constantly strive for, in order to provide the most competent patient-centered care. This experience helped humble me.

My experiences in Peru also helped me grow in my assessment skills. The entire time we worked in the clinic, it was our job as students to assess our patient and formulate a diagnosis. The physician would then check our diagnosis and recommendations and either agree or explain why we were wrong. This was an amazing learning opportunity.

The study abroad trip to Iquitos has not only made me a better person, but a better nurse. The knowledge and skills I learned and practiced in Peru built upon the foundation laid in my coursework and will help prepare me to be a more competent nurse.

Caitlin San Roman
Junior, Collierville, TN
Study Abroad in Costa Rica

As a SIXTEEN-YEAR OLD, I visited my sister while she was studying abroad in Mexico. From that moment on, I knew that I wanted to have the same opportunity during college. I began planning for my study abroad program as soon as I attended freshmen orientation.

I studied in a full-immersion program in Heredia, Costa Rica, at the National University of Costa Rica. While my Spanish skills were lacking, I was very blessed to find a program that gave me the opportunity to include a Spanish course and a tutoring program. I came away at the end of my five months abroad with fluency in Spanish as an additional skill to help me in my future nursing career. I cannot wait to have the opportunity to use this skill when communicating with Hispanic citizens in a clinical setting or in my nursing career abroad.

I am also grateful to have the opportunity to experience a culture outside of my own. I lived with a Costa Rican family, which humbled me every day as we navigated through gaps in communication and understanding. My Costa Rican family, along with friends that I met along the way, taught me to view myself—and my culture and traditions—from an outside perspective and to understand how we can come to have such different opinions. As a nurse, cultural sensitivity and understanding are skills you can never stop learning, and the cultural moments I encountered have further equipped me to handle future cultural interactions.
Studying abroad has been one of the best experiences life has offered me thus far. While learning about a completely different culture, I learned about myself, as well. For that, I am truly grateful, because I believe that a necessary component in providing excellent nursing care is knowledge of oneself. I have nothing but high hopes and expectations of my nursing career ahead, and I have my Costa Rican experience to thank.

Jessica Wilson
Junior, Murfreesboro, TN
Study Abroad in Italy

In SPRING 2011, I STUDIED ABROAD in Florence, Italy. There is so much more out there than what we know, and it is humbling. I learned patience and independence in trying to speak the language and navigate the city. I became more aware in non-verbal communication and my surroundings. I learned respect for our differences and, more importantly, I realized all of our similarities.

I am interested in working abroad after graduation, in a hospital for the Navy. My aunt was a Navy nurse and lived on the base in Sicily for three years, so I decided to spend four months in Italy. Although the Sicilians have a culture unique to the rest of Italy, the traveling I did allowed me to meet many Europeans of different backgrounds and cultures.

My goal for my study abroad experience was to travel as much as possible while staying in Florence. My History of Florence, History of the Sicilian Mafia, and Wines of Italy classes helped immensely. I butchered Italian while trying to buy meats with the locals at the Mercato Centrale. I tried to adjust to the slow-paced Italian life by doing everything a little more slowly and taking in the beauty of the ancient landmarks. The hospital can be a hectic place sometimes, and being able to appreciate taking your time and giving your attention is an important skill. Everything was a learning experience.

The owner of the vineyard I went to with my program told us, “Mangiare, bere, e l’amore forte,” which means, “eat, drink, and love strong.” I found this phrase to be a true representation of my abroad experience. I ate amazing Italian cuisine, appreciated the art and culture of Italian wines, and fell in love with the places I saw, people I met, and the culture.

This exposure will impact my ability to give culturally congruent care to my patients. My semester abroad forever changed my outlook on the world.
College of Nursing board member finds beauty in the roughest places

The choreography between Alan Solomon’s hands and the layers of earth they work is more fight than dance. Never tiring of grappling with stone, hoisting it up, hugging it to him, and shoving it into place with the heels of his hands, Solomon makes their jagged edges appear smooth.

Trading in his lab coat for worn-out jeans and raising walls in his garden is Solomon’s antidote to his work as director of the UT Graduate School of Medicine’s Human Immunology and Cancer Program.

Amid twenty acres of towering trees, bubbling fountains, and curious pathways just minutes from UT, Solomon’s garden boasts dozens of limestone walls. Much like his medical research, those stone walls, finely crafted and layered like stack cakes, have taken time—more than three decades of nights and weekends—to construct.

Rooted in a Promise

Solomon strives to better diagnose and treat patients with amyloidosis—an abnormality that occurs in certain forms of cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. Fighting these stubborn, as-yet incurable, amyloid-related diseases is his life’s work.

In 1992, Solomon became one of eight American Cancer Society Clinical Research Professors, a title he still holds. For more than four decades, the professor of medicine has received research grants from the National Institutes of Health.

For fifteen years, he and his research team have focused their efforts on combating amyloidosis, a disease that deposits mutated protein, ravages the vital organs, and often kills.

From mice to a human clinical trial approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, Solomon and his team’s time and patience have revealed an antibody that binds to the amyloid and has the potential to destroy this substance with the help of the body’s natural defense mechanisms. When labeled with a radioisotope, the antibody can detect the presence of amyloid in the body by PET/CT imaging.

Already more than two dozen patients with primary amyloidosis have come from Tennessee, other states, and Canada to be part of a clinical trial supported by an FDA grant.

“We plan to extend this work to the type of amyloid that occurs in the brains of patients with Alzheimer’s disease,” said Solomon, whose soft-spoken, reserved tone rises and accelerates. “Then we can uncover the mysteries of other amyloid-associated maladies, such as diabetes, and develop drugs and other helpful compounds to improve patient survival.”

His work is rooted in a promise.

After the death of one of his patients, a schoolteacher, more than a decade ago, Solomon made a vow to the woman’s husband that he and his research team were committed “to doing something to affect the disease that took his wife.

“When I make a promise, I try to keep it.”

The Heart of a Researcher

Solomon found his calling after winning his share of science fair ribbons for chemistry experiments.

As a student at Duke University’s School of Medicine, he discovered the world of clinical investigators, physician scientists who care for patients and also conduct laboratory research. From that moment, he knew that being a doctor was only part of his passion.

After completing medical school and then an internship at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, Solomon pursued three more years of clinical training and an additional four years of research training.

“To have a hand in medical research that can one day be lifesaving is the pinnacle of medical progress,” Solomon said.

Lured by the freedom of research, the New York native said “yes” to UT only after a second phone call from the director of the UT Memorial Research Center (predecessor to the UT Medical Center).

Anti-cancer drugs were a mere dream in 1966, when Solomon came to UT. Not much was known about DNA. MRI, CT, and PET scans did not exist. There was no such thing as the Internet, so researchers relied on the medical library, where research materials took months to reach library shelves.

“The extraordinary discoveries and progress made since that time are truly remarkable,” he said.

But it is more than discovery that drives Solomon’s endeavors. In his office, adorned by dozens of collected rocks on shelves, where books ordinarily would stand, is a picture of one of his patients—a woman with a soft, oval-shaped face and deep brown eyes.

“A remarkable and brave human being,” he said. Photos of other patients remind Solomon why he keeps writing grants, submitting papers, and researching the unknown.

Solomon honors the memory of many of his patients through the College of Nursing endowments he created. His gifts benefit aspiring nurses wishing to specialize in oncology, “because there will never be enough nurses,” he explained.

“Nurses are so valuable to medicine, yet they are the most undervalued. They are the eyes and ears of every doctor. They are the angels of mercy for every patient.”
God’s Answers to Our Prayers
While sitting alone in a pasture, his hands work to position what looks to be a broken, useless piece of rock. Down a sloping hill, Solomon is steadily creating another stone wall masterpiece.

He gives a grunt at the thought of equating his stonework to painstaking, backbreaking labor, “for it is the most peaceful and relaxing work that I know,” he said. “There is no cell phone attached to my hip. It is just me and the company of thousands of tons of rocks and the quiet of nature.”

A plaque resting in stone reveals the name of Solomon’s garden, GATOP, or God’s Answers to Our Prayers. Appropriately named, the one-time marble quarry reveals majestic views of the Smoky Mountains and the Tennessee River.

Showcased in national home magazines and acknowledged by the Smithsonian Institution’s Archives of American Gardens as a premier architectural garden, GATOP represents serenity—something Solomon faithfully seeks for all his patients.

“Nurses are so valuable to medicine, yet they are the most undervalued. They are the eyes and ears of every doctor. They are the angels of mercy for every patient.”

—Alan Solomon, director of the UT Graduate School of Medicine’s Human Immunology and Cancer Program
An active lifestyle doesn’t have to end at a certain age.

This belief is at the core of the Community of Gerontology Scholars (COGS) and one that Jan Witucki Brown, coordinator and associate professor in the College of Nursing, takes to heart.

“Our aging baby boomer population will be one of the largest older adult populations we’ve ever seen,” Brown said. “There are a lot of people looking at this as a negative and worrying about the strain on our resources and systems. But that doesn’t have to be the case. We need to switch our thinking on aging.”

COGS is composed of gerontology scholars, researchers, clinicians, and students from the colleges of Nursing; Social Work; and Education, Health, and Human Sciences. Like Brown, the community believes helping older adults maintain their function and improve their quality of life has a positive effect on the elderly and their contributions to society.

Staying Active

One way older adults stay active and involved is through volunteerism. Volunteer activities range from foster-grandparenting to helping out at a church to building a Habitat for Humanity house. People are often hesitant to employ older volunteers on projects requiring physical labor, however, and not much research on elderly adults and physical work has been conducted, Brown explained.

In light of this, Brown, along with several other COGS scholars, conducted a study exploring the culture and health of volunteering elders.

In September 2006, members of the COGS team studied older adults volunteering for a Habitat for Humanity project. The researchers worked alongside the volunteers—all of whom were at least fifty-seven years old—gathering data by participating, observing, and taking field notes and photographs.
The group observed the motivation, health, and volunteering patterns of forty participants. They found that older people who volunteered for the physically demanding work of building a Habitat for Humanity house were no more physically healthy than the general population for their respective age groups. These findings support previous reports that health is not a determinant of volunteering among older people.

“Our study showed strong evidence that older persons can provide valuable services beyond ‘traditional’ volunteering activities,” Brown says. “Anecdotal evidence from colleagues, church groups, and Habitat for Humanity personnel indicates that a significant number of older volunteers are providing such services.

“This is a rich area of information and knowledge regarding successful aging that should not be overlooked.”

Except for older people in very poor health, almost any older adult can be a volunteer in some capacity. However, according to Brown, few organizations tap into the professional skills of older adults. Others find it a challenge to get older adults to use their golden years of leisure to work or volunteer.

“We believe that nurses can act as change agents in their community to foster active recruitment and involvement of older volunteers,” Brown said. “Through their involvement, especially in faith-based communities, they are in a position to promote volunteering as an activity choice for older persons.”

Researching Outcomes
Last year COGS started working with community organizations and agencies that service the elderly. One thing the group does for these organizations is conduct outcomes research on programs, to prove success and possibly receive funding based on those results.

“It’s really important that we let community agencies know that we have researchers here at COGS and that we can help them evaluate their programs,” Brown said. “It’s a win-win situation: It helps us with our research, and it helps them either improve their services or earn more support for their programs.”

One particular community organization that has benefited from COGS research is Senior Citizens Home Assistance Services. That organization coordinates the Helping Others Provide Exceptional Care, or HOPE, program to train compassionate, dependable, and experienced caregivers.

HOPE provides training for family members who care for elderly adults in the home. They teach caregivers about various aspects of living that many may not think about when caring for an elderly adult, such as home improvements, personal care, fall prevention, medication management, and legal issues. Caregivers also learn how to how to take care of themselves—mentally and emotionally—and what other resources are available in the community for them.

COGS helped HOPE, a relatively new program, receive funding for its second year and a small grant for advertising. Brown and former COGS scholar Shu-li Chen evaluated the effectiveness of the HOPE training program and the impact it had on family caregivers.

“We found that the family caregivers had an increased sense of mastery and confidence in the caregiving role,” Brown said. “Through the program, they felt more comfortable and at peace and didn’t get as upset about things they encountered.”

Scholars at COGS have also conducted research on elders’ decisions to enter assisted-living facilities, in an attempt to identify predictors of home-stay care. The study discovered those decisions are made after weighing the availability of assistance. It was also found that that process continued even after elders moved into an assisted-living facility.

“Providers of long-term care can now add this new information into care planning for their elderly patients,” Brown said. “Understanding the process of decision-making in this segment of the population may lead to more positive relocation experiences among elders and increase the effectiveness of their decision-making behaviors.”

COGS scholars also teach various courses as part of undergraduate and graduate gerontology programs. One of the first courses taught to students in the gerontology program is Nursing 400, Aging in Society, a class that Brown feels exemplifies the COGS mission.

“In the class, I work to open people’s eyes to the positives of aging and healthy aging. Many people think that aging is a bad thing, but we like to show them that’s far from the case.”
In TODAY’S HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT, there are many challenges related to costs, quality, and access. Healthcare providers are dealing with a growing population of more diverse and older patients and ever-younger patients with chronic diseases. An increasingly complex healthcare delivery system demands nurses take a more active role in improving health and health care.

One way that nurses can do this is to be more involved in the development of policies related to health, health care, and professional practices at all levels.

Nurses are frequently cited as one of the most essential resources for transforming the delivery of health care in the United States. In the landmark report from the Institute of Medicine, The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health, one of the key messages is that nurses should be full partners with physicians and other health professionals in redesigning health care in the United States.

“This is a time of great opportunities for nurses, juxtaposed with great challenges.” said Carole Myers, assistant professor of nursing and co-director of UT Knoxville’s Center for Health Policy and Services Research. “The Future of Nursing outlines a hopeful future for our professions and, most importantly, the individuals and communities we serve.

“Yet in Tennessee, we are required to continually fend off threats to our practice in a state that persistently ranks in the bottom five on too many measures related to health, health care, and the social determinants of health. We must do all we can to seize the opportunities before us, remove barriers, and assure a better future for Tennesseans and all Americans.”

Several recent College of Nursing initiatives showcase the various ways nursing students and faculty are impacting policymaking at the state and federal levels.

BSN and MSN Students Participate in Tennessee Nurses Association Legislative Summit

In April, seventeen undergraduate and seven graduate students, along with five faculty members, attended the Tennessee Nurses Association Legislative Summit in Nashville. The summit provides nursing students the opportunity to learn about health policy development and the legislative process.

Attendees received information on how a bill is passed into law, the basics of becoming involved in health policy development, and how to effectively contact legislators. Following the morning sessions, students spent the afternoon meeting with their legislators in the Tennessee House and Senate.

Prior to the summit, the undergraduate students were asked to select a legislative issue of interest, research it, and talk about this issue when they met with their representative or senator. Collectively, the undergraduate students elected to work on a bill they had learned of in their senior-level mental health course—a bill that, if passed, would include
strangulation in the state’s definition of aggravated assault. After learning about the serious consequences of strangulation and observing situations in a clinical setting where a client was seriously injured from strangulation, the students understood the importance of this bill in protecting victims of domestic violence.

Students met with more than fourteen legislators, including Rep. Joe Armstrong and former Sen. Jamie Woodson. Prepared with written materials, the students distributed information to their legislator about the bill and asked for their vote of support. The students emphasized the statistics on domestic violence and strangulation, as well as their experiences observing the Knox County Fourth Circuit Court. They explained the devastating psychological effects of strangulation, as well as the potentially fatal outcome.

“Representative Armstrong and Senator Woodson could not have been more supportive or receptive to what we had to say,” one student recalled.

College of Nursing faculty members Ginger Evans and Sally Helton, mental health nurse practitioners and certified sexual assault nurse examiners, spent the last three years advocating for this strangulation bill to be passed into law. In May 2011, it unanimously passed in the Tennessee Legislature. As a result, Tennessee now has one of the toughest strangulation laws in the country. Governor Bill Haslam signed the bill into law, with Evans and Helton on hand.

Evans emphasized the importance of students’ early involvement in learning how to influence health policy and advocate for change. Through this experience, students were able to actively influence legislation and advocate for victims of domestic violence.

As one undergraduate stated, “I learned that it only takes one voice to make a difference.”

Nurse Anesthesia Students, Faculty Advocate at the State and Federal Levels

This year, College of Nursing students and faculty attended the Tennessee Association of Nurse Anesthetists Day on the Hill in Nashville and the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Mid-Year Assembly in Washington, DC. The group’s goals were to interact with state and federal legislators and to discuss legislative issues important to nurses and nurse anesthetists. Issues of interest include the critical need for educational funding for nurses and advanced practice nurses, including nurse anesthetists, the current scope of nursing practice and the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine, the value of nursing care, and the importance of non-discriminatory language in healthcare legislation.

“Legislators can only vote on behalf of their constituents if they know the issues faced by those constituents,” said Terri Preast, didactic education coordinator for the college’s Nurse Anesthesia program. “It is incumbent upon all of us to maintain relationships with the people who represent us at the state and federal levels.”
PhD Students Participate in Health Policy Institute, Pursue New Graduate Certificate in Health Policy

Three College of Nursing doctoral students, Suzanne Boswell, Kelly Carlson, and Cecily Strang, and a student in the public health program, Jayme French, attended the weeklong Washington Health Policy Institute in the nation’s capitol this summer. The students were sponsored by UT’s Center for Health Policy and Services Research.

Organized by George Mason University, the institute provides healthcare professionals, scholars, and educators the opportunity to explore all aspects of health policy. The students attended “Tennessee Tuesday” at the capitol building, where they had an opportunity to meet with the Tennessee delegation.

“Attending the WHPI gave me the confidence to speak up for people who don’t often get the opportunity to speak up for themselves,” Carlson said. “I am most passionate about how we distribute healthcare resources and learning about who benefits most from institutionalized inequality.”

All four students are working toward a new interdisciplinary graduate certificate in health policy. The College of Nursing has partnered with the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences’ Department of Public Health on the graduate certificate in health policy. The new certificate will prepare leaders, researchers, and educators to be active in all aspects of policymaking. Course experiences foster the examination and application of current policy research and the development of skills related to policy analysis, research, program evaluation, and advocacy.

“Ultimately, I can work hard physically to make a difference in the lives of a handful of others,” Boswell said. “But look at what a huge impact I can have by working smart and influencing policy.”

Professor Chairs Nursing Summit

How can nurses help meet the challenges associated with federal healthcare reform in delivering primary care services to improve the health of Tennesseans?

That question was at the heart of the one-day Primary
The keynote speaker was Susan Hassmiller of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, who headed up the Initiative on the Future of Nursing at the Institute of Medicine and is now leading implementation efforts at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Other speakers included Paul Erwin, director of the Center for Health Policy and Services Research, who outlined the specific healthcare challenges that Tennessee faces, and Peter Buerhaus of the Center for Interdisciplinary Health Workforce Studies at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, who presented cost and utilization data for advanced practice nurses treating Medicare beneficiaries.

Following the morning presentations, small groups convened to discuss how to maximize the contributions of nurses in the delivery of primary healthcare services to improve the health of Tennesseans. The goal was to develop Tennessee-specific actionable recommendations.

“Although opportunities abound, Tennessee and other states are faced with deep-rooted challenges related to our ability to respond to the reforms associated with the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,” Myers said. “Those challenges include inadequate infrastructure, scarce resources, and competing priorities. It is imperative that we, in Tennessee, be forward thinking in determining priorities for addressing these challenges to assure the health of all Tennesseans and subsequently the vitality of the state.”
Betty Clark cares for nurses she will never meet by remembering the college in her will

She remembers Kim, a young girl who was hospitalized for two years after swallowing lye and severely burning her mouth, throat, and stomach. She remembers the face of a young boy whose body was covered in burns after surviving a house fire.

Even though Betty Clark has not made the rounds on a hospital floor in seven years—she retired in 2004 after a forty-plus-year career in nursing—she never forgets the faces of her patients, and she rarely forgets their names.

As a child, sitting at the bedside of her ill grandfather, it was the smiling faces of nurses that left an impression on Clark.

Gingerly walking down the hospital halls—dressed in crisp, white uniforms, with matching white hosiery and shoes—nurses toted the charts of patients and were just as knowledgeable as the doctors they followed. They shouldered so much responsibility with pride and little fanfare that “they seemed surreal and almost angelic to me,” Clark recalled. “I was just a little girl, but I knew I wanted to be one of them.”

“I grew up in a household where we did not have a lot. We were poor and everyone around us was poor, but we did not know it because we had everything we needed—the basic necessities and love.”

The oldest of three children, Clark’s parents instilled in her a reverence for education.

“Even though I knew my choices were to either become a teacher or a nurse, it was more options than my parents ever had,” she said.

At age seventeen, Clark, a Maryville, Tennessee, native enrolled in the School of Nursing at the University of Tennessee Research Center and Hospital, the predecessor to the UT Medical Center, along with sixty other women.

“After six months of classes on the Hill and clinical experience at the hospital, I worked my first night shift as a student nurse,” she said. “The program was rigorous, with studies in medical, surgical, pediatric, psychiatric, and outpatient nursing, but I was determined not just to do well in a class, but to graduate.”

Many of her classmates chose marriage over graduation and never finished their studies. In 1962, Clark kneeled and was officially crowned with her nursing cap during her graduation ceremony. She was told by a faculty member to “always wear it with pride and upon the standards of your chosen profession.”

She did, and still does.

Clark’s eyes still glimmer with excitement as she remembers the beginning of her nursing career. Making $255 a month, Clark shared an apartment on Cline Street and worked from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. on Five East, the surgical floor of UT Hospital.

“That lasted for a year. I moved to the pediatrics floor and worked the day shift.”

After the birth of her two children, Clark became a PTA mom.

“But I never really gave up nursing. I volunteered for the Red Cross and at my children’s schools in the nurse’s office.”

By the early 1980s, Clark had enrolled in some refresher nursing courses at the prompting of a colleague, and “fell in love with nursing all over again. It was as if it had never left me.”

As an oncology nurse for nearly a decade at Blount Memorial Hospital and former president of the Tennessee Valley Oncology Nursing Society, Clark became engrossed and fascinated by cutting-edge cancer research and treatments, so much so that she joined the team of a cancer research center.

“It was just as exciting as when I first started my career,” Clark said. “We were making discoveries that changed and saved lives.

“I remember two women who were at the end of trying this and that. One had stage-four breast cancer and the other had stage-four ovarian cancer. They survived, and they were not just patients, they are two of my dearest friends.”

It was those friends who helped Clark see her way through a dark tunnel after being diagnosed with a rare form of cervical cancer. In 2000, six months after losing her husband, she became a patient and was told her survival rate was less than 5 percent.

“Obviously, my purpose was not fulfilled,” she said. “I still had more people to care for.”

She is caring for nurses she will never meet by remembering the College of Nursing in her will and creating an endowed scholarship.

This scholarship will provide funds for undergraduate students in the nursing program.

Twice widowed, Clark lost her mother, sister, and best friend all in the same year, but even with life’s series of sorrows and betrayals, she holds fast to a quiet resolve and humble demeanor.

“You have angels in life and you do not even know it,” she said. “So I have lived my life channeled into helping other people.

“And I would do it all over again. I would not change a thing.”
BSN Class of 2013