“One that beareth a torch shadoweth oneself to give light to others.”

-Lauren Akins ’12
Page 4

-Carole Myers ’81, ’06
Page 16

-Julie Worley ’13
Page 32
Why Do More Nurses Work for Covenant Health?

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Morristown-Hamblen Healthcare System

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OUR VISION

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Dean and Professor

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Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor

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Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Clinical Assistant Professor

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Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs and Clinical Assistant Professor

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The Volunteer Nurse is published by the UT College of Nursing. Comments and letters can be sent to the editor at UT College of Nursing, c/o Communications, 1200 Volunteer Boulevard, Knoxville, TN 37996, volnurse@tenn. ORG.

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The Volunteer Nurse is published by the UT College of Nursing with the support of the College of Nursing, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

The Volun...
DEAR COLLEAGUES, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS:

The Torchbearer statue is a monument on our campus that stands tall for all to see and remember the creed “One that beareth a torch shadoweth oneself to give light to others.” The statue symbolizes UT’s culture of leadership and service.

Being a Volunteer nurse is about embodying that creed and working hard for something bigger than you. It means leading the way, giving back to the community, setting an example, standing out—bearing a torch.

As you will see in this edition of The Volunteer Nurse, our students, faculty, and alumni are nurse scholars, or aspiring nurse scholars, who are committed to leadership, service, and improving health. I invite you to learn about a few of the many ways they are moving forward through their leadership and service to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities.

Alumna Lauren Gregory Akins travels the world to improve the health of children (page 4). Carole Myers is shining light on health policy and simplifying the complicated world of health care through HealthConnections (page 16). Students and faculty are leading care in disadvantaged communities locally and abroad (pages 4 and 7). We have an interprofessional team working to promote safety and quality through the Health Innovation Partnership Program (page 24). These and other stories exemplify the work of our nursing scholars who are carrying their torch and leading the way.

Today’s health care system is facing significant challenges. Yet just as the Torchbearer’s light never goes out, a Volunteer nurse never stops aspiring, discovering, creating, researching, innovating, and collaborating. We are creating transformational change and the future is bright!

Thank you for your passion, your pride, and your Volunteer spirit. Together we can be, in the words of the alma mater, a “beacon shining bright” and continue giving light to others through nursing education, research, and practice.

Go VOLS!

Victoria Niederhauser, DrPH, RN, PPCNP-BC, FAAN
DEAN AND PROFESSOR
TWITTER: @VOLNURSINGDEAN
Love One

by Tyra Tucker Haag ('04)

Q&A: Lauren’s love of Uganda

Why are family preservation and agricultural sustainability such a big focus of Love One?

One of our biggest goals is for the efforts we’ve made to have a lasting impression on the people and the communities. We want the education and life lessons—whether it’s in agriculture, taking care of babies, or learning about germs/infections and how to avoid them—to be passed down from generation to generation, in turn creating a healthier, more sustainable world.

Family and sustainability are some of our biggest passions at Love One because that’s what everything comes back to. Family is everything and if you can create a sustainable community around those families, the emergent need for outside help is greatly reduced. At the end of the day, that is the greatest gift to a community—the ability to exist without relying on someone else to take care of your needs.

Do you have a favorite Ugandan meal?

I love chicken curry with garlic naan.

Are there any Ugandan traditions or songs you’re especially fond of?

The dancing is incredible! Even at a young age, the kids are fantastic dancers. It’s such a big part of their culture and they are so proud of it. Not to mention it’s so fun to learn—or to try to, haha!

Why is it important to support and empower families around the world?

This is OUR world. And there is only one of them. The people around the world are our people, and I think it’s our job to take care of the world we’re fortunate enough to live in—whether we feel called to serve. If we have gifts we can share, I think we’re doing ourselves and the world around us a disservice by keeping it all to ourselves. One of my favorite quotes I’ve heard is “we are blessed to be a blessing,” and I think it’s a great one to live by.

F for alumna Lauren Gregory Akins (’12), nursing isn’t just about wearing scrubs or taking vital signs—it’s about caring for people, whether they’re in a hospital room, a doctor’s office, a neighborhood down the road, or a small village halfway around the world. For the last six years, Akins has traveled to Haiti, Kenya, and Uganda more times than she can count to serve children and provide medical care to local community members.

Akins says her nursing degree has taken her all over the world. But her unexpected journey to motherhood began in Masindi, Uganda, on a medical mission that led her to the little girl she and her husband would later adopt.

After graduation, one of Akins’ friends introduced her to a nonprofit called Love One International, a group dedicated to keeping families together, teaching agricultural sustainability, and offering medical treatment for the community’s long-term success.

The organization was founded in 2009 to support children and families in Masindi, Uganda. Akins has spent thousands of hours volunteering, raising funds, and serving on the board of directors. Love One serves about 450 children a day through educational outreach, gardening lessons, teaching parents a trade, and providing free medical care.

On her latest trip to Masindi this summer, Akins worked with other volunteers in a medical clinic to provide care to more than 200 children. While not in the clinic, she served local families by cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and fitting residents for new shoes.

But it was during a 2016 trip to Masindi that she met an orphaned baby who had been dropped off at a local children’s home.

“One I held her, I couldn’t stop,” says Akins. “I sent a photo of me holding her to my husband, who was back home. He said I’d never looked so beautiful and wanted to know more about this baby girl.”

On the phone later that night, Akins’ husband told her it felt like she was holding their daughter.

“Nursing is more than what you do. It’s who you are.”

—LAUREN AKINS

“Nursing is more than what you do. It’s who you are.”

—LAUREN AKINS
In that moment, the couple made the decision to start the adoption process. They navigated mountains of red tape, made numerous trips to Uganda, and spent hours filling out paperwork.

Akins was pregnant and nearing her third trimester when in May 2017, their daughter—whom they named Wills Gray—came to the US to begin a new life.

“My dreams were confirmed to the things that I knew. But I’m so grateful God helped you down my own walls and free a life without limits.”

Akins and her husband, Thomas Rhee, live in Nashville with their two daughters—Wills Gray, who is now two and a half, and Ada James, who just turned one.

Because of her husband’s career in country music, she’s walked several red carpets but says none of them compares to walking along the malls in Uganda.

“Although I haven’t been a nurse in the traditional sense, I’ve devoted my life to caring for and loving others in my own way. To me, that’s the heart and soul of nursing. I know it seems impossible to care for every child’s need in the world, but we can each love one.”

“My life has been completely changed. It is definitely a life between my medical health rotations and labor and delivery. Being equal as attending to me and my dreams to loving others.

What was your favorite place to eat off campus?

Hands down, Copper Cellar for $5 burger nights.

What was your favorite TV show—that came on every Sunday night.

Grey’s Anatomy

It was definitely a tie between my mental health and 32 have become trainers. To date, 181 people have participated in the training for educating individuals about end-of-life care options that have collaborated with health care providers, end-of-life care specialists, UT videographers, extension agents, and education technology specialists to develop culturally relevant materials for educating individuals about end-of-life care options that contribute to quality of life and a dignified death.

The program site of Scott County is designated a medically underserved and health professional shortage area, and residents have limited access to health care. Low literacy and poverty rates are widespread, with 26 percent of the county’s residents living below the poverty level compared to 15.8 percent statewide and 13 percent nationally.

Honoring Life’s Journey uses a train-the-trainer format to teach church and community leaders and residents, who in turn teach individuals and families about end-of-life care resources. This model provides the necessary tools and format for sustained community-based education. The project includes plans to reach a broader range of communities through UT Extension outreach in Tennessee counties.

Recently, Scott County community members trained undergraduate nursing students. These students are now teaching the people who write through their community health clinical experiences, usually seniors living in retirement facilities. To date, 181 people have participated in the training and 32 have become trainers.

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Q&A: Lauren’s love of Rocky Top

What was your favorite nursing class at college? Pediatrics and Pharmacology. Professor Akins was so cool.

Did you have a favorite nursing professor? I really got to love Nancy Hitler as my mental health clinical professor. The taught me so much as a nurse, but also just as a friend. The truly impacted me.

What was your favorite clinical rotation? It was definitely the first between my mental health rotations and labor and delivery. Being equal as attending to me and my dreams to loving others.

What was your nursing plan to act off campus? Hands down, Copper Cellar for $5 burger nights.

What was your favorite spots to hang out/off campus? Wills Gray was my favorite.

What TV shows did you watch on a warm sunny day at the amphitheater stairs off of Pedestrian Walkway.

Grey’s Anatomy

We also watched Grey’s Anatomy, his favorite TV show—that came on every Sunday night.

What does the Volunteer spirit mean to you?

The University of Tennessee is such a big part of my life. The classes I took, the friends I made, the memories I have. The University of Tennessee is such a big part of my life.

It was definitely a tie between my mental health and 32 have become trainers. To date, 181 people have participated in the training for educating individuals about end-of-life care options that have collaborated with health care providers, end-of-life care specialists, UT videographers, extension agents, and education technology specialists to develop culturally relevant materials for educating individuals about end-of-life care options that contribute to quality of life and a dignified death.

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**Pediatric Nurse Practitioners Serve Children in Scott County**

Since January, pediatric nurse practitioners from the College of Nursing have been working two days a week to serve children in Scott County, Tennessee, at the Mountain People’s Health Council in Huntsville. In addition, a pediactrician from the college serves the children once or twice a month.

This is the first partnership developed by the college’s Center for Nursing Practice to improve access to health care in Tennessee communities.

“The Center for Nursing Practice is pleased to have initiated and facilitated an expansion of the college’s pediatric primary care expertise,” said Nan Gaylord, director of the center and professor of nursing. “Children in Scott County will now have access to our pediatric nurse practitioners and pediatrician. We are excited about the relationship with the Mountain Peoples Health Council and the clinical opportunities in Scott County for our nursing students.”

The partnership was made possible by a private grant that initiated the Center for Nursing Practice. The center promotes the health of Tennessee’s communities through increased access to care, support for nurse-managed clinics, community outreach, collaboration, and quality education for nurses and other health care professionals.

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**Annoncing New College Leaders: Durbin, Hutson, Lavin**

Terri Durbin and Sadie Hutson step into new leadership roles and Roberta Lavin joins the College of Nursing as Mary Gunther transitions back to her faculty position after serving as executive associate dean of academics for the past five years.

Durbin obtained her DNP in acute care nursing with a focus in anesthesia in 2015 from the UT Health Science Center and was simultaneously promoted to associate director of the nurse anesthetist concentration at UT Knoxville. She is currently earning a PhD in education with a focus in cultural studies from UT Knoxville.

Hutson has a BSN from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and both an MSN and a PhD in nursing from the University of Pennsylvania. She is a board-certified women’s health nurse practitioner and currently serves as director for the hereditary cancer risk assessment program at Pikesville Medical Center in Pikesville, Kentucky.

Lavin joins the College of Nursing as the college’s Center for the Department of Health and Human Services; worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Tucson, Arizona; and spent a few months tooling around the South Pacific on a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research vessel. After 9/11 and the subsequent anthrax attacks, she was selected to be director of the Secretary’s Command Center for the Department of Health and Human Services and then chief of staff for the assistant secretary for preparedness and response. She ended her USPS career again working with the poor and underserved, leading research and development for a national disaster care management program. Her current research focuses on bringing cultural competency around urban and rural communities to practicing nurses and disaster preparedness. Projects include infusion and assessment of cultural competency in training DNP students, development of a rural implicate association test, and research on disaster response training gaps for primary care providers.

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**Gaylord Designated an AAN Edge Runner**

The American Academy of Nursing announced the designation of Nan Gaylord as an Academic Edge Runner for her model “Interprofessional Practice at the Vine School Health Center. A School-Based Nurse-Managed Clinic.” The academy’s Raise the Voice Edge Runner initiative recognizes nurse-designed models of care that improve quality, impact cost, and enhance patient satisfaction.

The Vine School Health Center is a nurse-designed interprofessional practice located within the Vine School in an economically disadvantaged community in Knox County, Tennessee. The center provides physical, mental, and behavioral health care services to children attending the school and to anyone from birth to 21 years of age, or until he is a student in the county. It also provides telehealth services and periodic on-site care to 21 additional schools within the county. The interprofessional makeup of the center allows it to assist families with concerns such as food resources, housing, and clothing.

In the 2016-17 academic year, the center provided 4,453 physical health visits, 1,796 mental health visits, 1,796 immunizations, and 116 Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment exams.

“Dr. Nan Gaylord and the Vine School Health Center represent the essence of nursing and community care,” said American Academy of Nursing President Karen Cox. “By bringing quality care on a broad range of issues to where children and students learn, work, and play every day, the Vine School Health Center is improving health, increasing access, and reducing the cost of care.”

“I am honored to be designated an Edge Runner by the American Academy of Nursing for doing what I consider a privilege every day—providing care to the children and students of the Vine School and Knox County, Tennessee,” said Gaylord.

---

**JOIN US FOR Research Day**

**November 5, 2018**

**5–9pm**

**Hilton Downtown Knoxville**

Research Day is an annual event for faculty, students, and health care professionals to share the impact of their research while hearing new perspectives and forging collaborative partnerships.

5–6pm Poster Presentations

6:15–7pm Dinner

7–9pm Boynton Lecture

Harleigh Buck, “Inspiring Hope through Palliative and End of Life Care across the Lifespan”

For details and registration information, contact the Office of Research Services at conresearch@utk.edu.
College Receives NIH and HRSA Grants

Hutson and Moore Selected for AACN 2018 Leadership for Academic Nursing Program

Two members of the nursing faculty, Sadie Hutson and Phillip Moore, were selected to participate in the 2018 Leadership for Academic Nursing Program (LANP) through the American Association of College of Nursing (AACN).

A total of 49 nursing faculty from across the country were selected through a competitive review process. LANP is designed for those who have experience in academic administration and aspire to more senior administrative or executive positions. The yearlong fellowship provides participants with a focused assessment experience, studies in executive leadership, and networking opportunities.

Hutson is the associate dean of graduate programs and Moore serves as the coordinator of the RN-to-BSN program.

Associate Professor Lisa C. Lindley has received a five-year award of $1.3 million from the National Institutes of Health National Institute of Nursing Research for her project “Effectiveness of Concurrent Care to Improve Pediatric and Family Outcomes at End of Life.” The study will investigate the impact of concurrent hospice care compared to standard hospice care in improving continuity and quality of pediatric end of life. Lindley will be working with an interdisciplinary team of pediatric end-of-life scholars from nursing, medicine, and hospital care economics to conduct the first-ever concurrent care study with children and adolescents in hospice care, using nationally represented Medicaid data from 2011 and 2015.

The study will compare the effectiveness, potential burdens, and cost of concurrent care compared to standard hospice care for children and adolescents. The findings will expand our understanding of pediatric concurrent care and will inform clinicians and families of the value of this intervention for children and adolescents. This line of investigation is ultimately expected to improve care and outcomes for children, adolescents, and their families at end of life.

Associate Professor Sandra Mixer has received a four-year award of $2.6 million from the US Health Resources and Services Administration for her project “Transforming RN Roles in Community-Based Integrated Primary Care through Academic Practice Partnership.” The project supports the expansion of the academic practice partnership between the College of Nursing and Cherokee Health System–CHS, a nonprofit organization that provides primary care, behavioral health, and addiction services to more than 70,000 people throughout Tennessee. BSN students will be recruited and trained to provide integrated services to culturally diverse rural and underserved populations at four CHS sites in East Tennessee.

The program includes an innovative undergraduate nursing curriculum change and advancement of the RN workforce through professional development in primary and preventive care. It will provide the region’s first comprehensive community-based integrated primary care (CBIPC) training for students and RNs, with a focus on primary care, population health, and interprofessional education and practice and an emphasis on chronic disease prevention and control, recovery-based mental health and substance use, and childhood obesity. Faculty and clinical partnership liaisons and clinical coaches will serve as role models, preceptors, and mentors to students through more than 300 hours of clinical experiences in CBIPC settings over two years. Nursing workforce projections for the next decade forecast an unprecedented need for nurses to expand their roles in preventive, primary, and chronic care, and CBIPC training will uniquely qualify our BSN graduates to meet these challenges.

International Experiences Provide Global Perspective

In March, a group of 11 nursing students and two faculty members spent their spring break volunteering in Belize during the college’s annual international clinical experience trip. The group worked in a town and nearby villages in a remote and underserved area of Belize, where homes often lack basic provisions such as electricity and water. Through this experience, students develop cultural competency and a global perspective that cannot be achieved in a classroom.

In May, a group of students traveled to Pamplona, Spain, with Associate Professor Sue McConnell to attend Nursing Summer School at the University of Navarra along with other nursing students from other countries.

The weeklong program provided students with classes and clinical visits along with cultural activities, all designed to advance their knowledge of international health care.

Belize

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SPAIN

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SCOTLAND

The College of Nursing’s exchange partnership with Robert Gordon University’s School of Nursing and Midwifery in Aberdeen, Scotland, was launched in 2012 and continues to provide two nursing students from both schools spent four weeks together, with their time divided between the two countries. A main objective of the partnership is to expose students to health delivery systems in different countries.

THE JOURNEY

The University of Tennessee’s journey is one with an ambitious goal—to join the ranks of the nation’s top public research universities. As part of that effort, the College of Nursing is focusing on three priority areas:

FACULTY SUPPORT

Increased faculty support helps build an even stronger academic research program.

GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

We are committed to meeting the critical need for advanced practice nurses and leaders with graduate-level preparation for caregivers, advanced practitioners, professors, researchers, and nurse executives.

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Named scholarships are critical to attracting and retaining the most outstanding students. An enhanced pool of scholarship dollars supports our students and, through their careers, helps to improve the quality of life for citizens of Tennessee, the nation, and the world.

STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES

Every possible space in the College of Nursing building is occupied by students and faculty. To meet the nursing demands of our state and continue to provide education in a state-of-the-art facility, we require additional space.

Support the College of Nursing and join the journey today!

Contact: James Obear, associate vice chancellor for development, at 865-974-2370 or jobear@utk.edu.
April Bryant began her career in nursing more than 20 years ago as a certified nursing assistant. She earned in the Tennessee College of Applied Science immediately following her high school graduation and earned a degree in practical nursing, then continued her studies with an ASN from Lincoln Memorial University in her native Claiborne County. After working for several years in acute care she completed her MSN in the Family Nurse Practitioner program at Vanderbilt University, where she was a recipient of the Laura Catherine Rankin scholarship and a member of Sigma Theta Tau National Honor Society. She has since also earned a post-master’s certificate in oncology from the Oncology Nursing Society, completed advanced training in emergency care, and worked as a member of the Tennessee Nurses Political Action Committee advocating legislation for full practice authority. Bryant is currently enrolled in the DNP program at UT Chattanooga and expects to graduate next year. Her passion is caring for the people of rural Appalachia, increasing access to care, and being an advocate for the field of nursing.

Barbara (Libby) King has a BSN from Tennessee Wesleyan University and an MSN from Frontier Nursing University. A board-certified family nurse practitioner, she is currently working on a post-master’s certification in psychiatric mental health. She has held the position of FNP faculty liaison with the Improving Clinical Education Grant since 2016 and will transition to working with the undergraduate program this fall.

Jason Kiernan received his BSN from the University of Michigan and his MSN from Wayne State University in Detroit. He is currently a doctoral candidate at WSU, researching the neuromodulatory effects of music and their clinical intervention potential for nursing practice. He is an AANE-certified acute care nurse practitioner, with most of his NP practice years focused in hematology and oncology. He is a long-standing member of the Oncology Nursing Society and the American Society of Clinical Oncology. He has recently published two papers in the Oncology Nursing Forum on examination of genes-variants and their influence on chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, and a PRISMA-based systematic review of music science as a viable nursing intervention for chemotherapy-induced nausea.

Ruth Palan Lopez has a BS and PhD in nursing from Boston College and an MSN from Boston University, and she has served as a Claire Eagan Postdoctoral Fellow. A genodermatological nurse practitioner who seeks to empower nurses through education, leadership, and research, she has focused her research program on people with dementia and their family caregivers. She is co-PI on a study, funded by the National Institute on Aging, that examines how regional and ethnic differences influence end-of-life care for nursing home residents with advanced dementia. She was recently inducted as a fellow in both the Gerontological Society of America and the American Academy of Nursing.

Travis Rhuten received his BSN in 2013 and his MSN in 2017, both from UT Knoxville. He is an ANCC-certified family nurse practitioner. He has served for the past five years at UT Medical Center as an acute care nurse focused on oncology and urology, and he is a member of the Oncology Nursing Society. As a clinical instructor, he will be working with the undergraduate students in clinical sites and serving as a lab instructor for Health Assessment.

Michelle Smoak is originally from Walterboro, South Carolina, and comes to the college as a clinical instructor. She has a BSN from the University of South Carolina and an MSN in education from Western Governors University. She is currently working toward a DNP in health care administration with an education focus from Samford University and expects to receive her degree in spring 2019. Smoak has worked as an ER nurse since receiving her license in 2010. She is active in the Emergency Nurses Association and serves as the Smokey Mountain Chapter president.
Accolades

Samereh Abdoli received a Community Engagement Grant incuring through the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach and a Small Research Grant award from Sigma Theta Tau for her project “Listening to Family Caregivers: A Comprehensive Caregivers’ Needs Assessment in Co-Occurrence of Diabetes and Dementia.”

Joel G. Anderson was selected as a fellow in the Gerontological Society of America. This peer recognition for outstanding contributions to the field of gerontology represents the highest class of membership for the society.

Carrie Bailey was elected president of the Gamma Chi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau for the 2018–2020 term.

Edelyn Bishop serves as faculty advisor to a new student organization on campus, the Ambassadors for Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention. At the campus Student Life Awards in April, the organization was recognized as New Organization of the Year for 2018.

Sharon Davis received the Laura Barnes Research Award.

Pamela Hardesty was elected president of the College of Nursing Home Quality Measures and a team of leaders from the NLN Center for Innovation in Interprofessional Collaboration.

Tess Kennaard received the outstanding clinical faculty award from the Class of 2018.

Rebecca Koszalinski and a team of engineering graduate students and faculty received first place for the Spark for Myself mobile app in the Data Analytics and Information Systems Mobile Application Competition at the Institute of Industrial Systems Engineering Annual Conference in May. She was one of two faculty members selected by UT to submit proposals to the prestigious Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation Innovator Fellows Program, which recognizes early-career innovators with a high potential to accelerate progress in scientific research, environmental conservation, and patient care. She participated in a private foundation workshop held in partnership with UT’s Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy, and was invited to review grant applications for the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.

Robert Lavin was selected to serve on a National Academies of Sciences planning committee for Exploring Medical and Public Health Preparedness for a Nuclear Incident.

Lisa C. Lindley was inducted as a fellow in palliative care nursing by the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association in February. She was awarded the 2017-18 Alan Solomon, MD, Faculty Oncology Award. Earning Nursing Research to UT’s Health Policy, to which she contributed a chapter, received the American Journal of Nursing 2017 Book Award.

Lindsay Melton is a recipient of the 2018 Executive MBA Scholarship from UT’s Haslam College of Business.

Missy Miller celebrated 25 years of service to the College of Nursing in June 2018.

Katie Morgan received a Patient Experience Research grant from the Beryl Institute to study the patient experience of trauma-based interprofessional collaboration.

Karen Rose received a FUNDON award from the UT Office of Research and Engagement along with collaborators Xiaoping Zhao (engineering) and Roberto Fernandez (Pat Summit Clinic) for a research project testing a brain-computer interface using optic flow protocols to measure cognitive decline in family caregivers. She was induced into Phi Kappa Phi in May.

Karen Rose and Joel Anderson are guest editors for an upcoming issue of Journal of Family Nursing focused on care of older adults.

Shelia Swift became a 2017 fellow of the AACN Leadership for Academic Nursing Program (LANP) after completing the year-long program focused on executive leadership experiences.

Sandra Thomas received the Melva M. Hendrix Leadership Award at the annual conference of the International Society of Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses in Tempe, Arizona, in April.

Carole R. Myers has been named to the American Academy of Nursing’s 2018 Class of New Fellows. HealthConnections, a radio segment Myers created and coliasts, airs every other week on WUTK/UT’s NPR affiliate, and has been picked up by other stations. Myers and her cohort were recently awarded a first place Golden Press Award for radio-documentary public affairs programming.

Victoria Niederhauser was selected for Leadership Tennessee, appointed to the Board of Directors for the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research, selected as a finalist for the YWCA Tribute to Women, and appointed co-chair of the National Nurse Advisory Council for the Beryl Institute.

Kim Powell was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship with the University of Minnesota’s Sinclair School of Nursing. She will be working with Greg Alexander, a senior faculty mentor, on his AHRQ-funded study “A National Report of Nursing Home Quality Measures and Information Technology.”

Congratulations on Your Retirement!

Karen Rose

The DAISY Faculty Award was presented to Clinical Assistant Professor Deb Chyka during the college’s spring commencement ceremony. Nominated by students and fellow faculty members, Chyka was chosen through a blind review process by a selection committee.

Chyka’s nominators said she is an energetic instructor with a passion for clinical excellence for herself and her students. She challenges her students to think critically and creates teaching moments that, in return, spark passion in her students. Chyka (right) in students that being a nurse during momentous times for patients and families is a privilege, an honor and an important part of the essence of nursing. Her passion radiates to students, patients, and families.

A collaborative program of the DAISY Foundation and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the DAISY Faculty Award is a national recognition program that honors teachers for their commitment and inspirational influence on future generations of nurses.
One February evening in 2017, Carole Myers, associate professor of nursing, had a giant “aha” moment. She was participating in a town hall meeting about health care hosted by Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero. The meeting was right after President Trump was inaugurated, and potential changes to health care policy dominated headlines. People were confused—and on the edges of their seats. The town hall’s turnout wasn’t just robust, it was huge. There wasn’t enough space for everyone. And after the meeting ended, it was clear that the conversation wasn’t over. “People weren’t just interested, they were worried,” said Myers, who is also the coordinator for UT’s Health Policy graduate certificate program. “They had so many questions. Questions like ‘I have cancer—am I going to lose my health care coverage if the Affordable Care Act is repealed?’ or ‘How will I care for my disabled husband under a new law?’” Myers realized there was a new avenue to fulfill her lifelong mission of improving access to care—the media. Myers began her professional journey by providing care to the underserved as an owner of a small rural clinic following her graduation from UT as a family nurse practitioner, then jumped to the other side of the spectrum with managerial positions at two large Fortune 500 companies. In 2006, Myers joined UT’s faculty to conduct research, teach, and engage in community and professional service. While her roles have run the gamut, they’re all connected by the common thread of her passion for advancing high-quality, cost-effective access to health care. Media engagement is the next iteration of her work. “Rather than looking at media as an occasional sideline, the idea crystallized that we could advance policy and access to health care through media,” said Myers. She had already appeared sporadically in news stories and written opinion pieces and articles for a variety of news organizations, including the Huffington Post and the Nashville Tennessean. She soon set to work drafting up a proposal for a segment called HealthConnections on the university’s NPR station, WUOT.
The segment would seek to inform people about health care policy by putting the issues into lay terms.

“The show would continue the conversation that began at the town-hall meeting,” she said. “We could talk about issues of importance and translate it into something that is understandable.”

When Myers pitched her idea to Brandon Hollingsworth, news director of WUOT, he saw a way to address the qustions generated by potential health care changes at a time when attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act were prevalent in the national conversation.

Myers is a strong advocate for access to high-quality, cost-effective care where prevalent in the national conversation.

Myers had long suspected that part of the health care policy by putting the issues into lay terms. She looked at the issues as a nurse and advocate with a focus on what it means for people,” she said. “My goal is to help people understand issues by dispelling the myths and getting past the partisan rhetoric to what is really going on.”

HealthConnections airs as an eight-minute segment on Tuesdays during NPR’s news shows Morning Edition and All Things Considered. Myers and Hollingsworth explore a broad range of health-related issues such as TennCare, health care expenses, gun violence, the opioid crisis, and teen suicide. The coverage is nonpartisan, straightforward, and factual.

“The aim of the show is to arm people with information and ideas for action,” said Myers. “[The] approach has really resonated with our audience, and HealthConnections has an average of 79,000 weekly listeners and roughly 76,000 monthly downloads.”

The segment was planned to last about three months, recently celebrated its first anniversary with no end in sight.

“I look at the issues as a nurse and advocate with a focus on what it means for people,” said Myers. “My goal is to help people understand issues by dispelling the myths and getting past the partisan rhetoric to what is really going on.”

HealthConnections has been picked up by stations in Nashville, Chattanooga, and New York City, and it recently earned a Golden Press award from the East Tennessee Society for Professional Journalists. Myers and Hollingsworth are investigating syndication of the segment to reach wider audiences. Myers is also working with colleagues at UT’s School of Music and College of Communication and Information to produce a podcast series that would feature personal stories as a way to shed light on common health care concerns.

“It really has been an honor to try to represent the concerns of people,” she said. Myers had long suspected that part of the health care information gap had to do with the underrepresentation of nurses in the media. A recent study—a follow-up study to 1997’s National Study of Nursing in the Media—confirmed her hunch. It found that nurses were featured in only 2 percent of health-related media stories, down from 14 percent in the earlier study.

In addition to an overall media bias against women—who were quoted only about half as often as men—the study found that journalists prefer subjects with titles high on the organizational ladder, men, and doctors. Compounding the problem, contacts at health care organizations, academic institutions, and nursing associations don’t promote nurses as subjects or sources for health stories.

Further, the research found that nurses don’t prioritize responding to media. Myers is trying to change this.

In an opinion piece in the June 13, 2018 issue of All Things Considered, she wrote, “It is incumbent upon nurses to claim their professional authority, expertise, and experiences and proactively engage with the media. Standing up can make you a target. This has not deterred nurses historically in doing what they had to do to improve health and health care.”

Standing up can make you a target. This has not deterred nurses historically in doing what they had to do to improve health and health care.

“People are dying too soon or suffering,” said Myers. “You can’t live a happy, productive life if you are in pain all the time,” she said, adding that there’s a growing relationship between good health care and the economy.

Myers recently began a new fellowship appointment, one of several, at George Washington University’s Center for Health Policy and Media. She’s working with an array of health care professionals who are using creative forms like poetry and comics to better inform the public about the issues. She’s had many “aha” moments already and hopes to share herself out there, she can help more people have their own—furthering her mission of better care for all.
Too Little of a Good Thing

By Whitney Heins

L ast year, almost every graduate of UT’s College of Nursing had a similar dilemma—multiple job offers from which to choose. On the face of it, this doesn’t seem like a problem at all. But underneath it lies a very real issue—a nursing shortage.

“One of the last few years, as dean, I have seen a shift in the demand for nursing within our local community,” said Dean Victoria Niederhauser. “I’ve had hospitals and health care systems approach me wanting to speak with students about employment before they even graduate. This is much different than when I began seven years ago.”

Consider these stats: According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job growth rate for registered and advanced practice registered nurses is projected to exceed that of most professions over the next 10 years, with 1.2 million registered nurse vacancies emerging nationwide between 2014 and 2022. In Tennessee, a recent workforce projection study estimates a 40 percent increase in registered nurse job growth over the next 10 years, with 1.2 million registered nurse vacancies emerging nationwide between 2014 and 2022. In Tennessee, a recent workforce projection study estimates a 40 percent increase in registered nurse job growth.

This projected shortage bears serious consequence—people not having access to the affordable skilled care they need.

“Without an adequate supply of local nurses, hospitals are forced to either shut down units or hire traveling nurses, which significantly increases costs to the already financially strapped health care system,” said Niederhauser. “There are many reasons for increased demand for nurses—aging baby boomers, growing rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity, increased emphasis on preventative care, and new roles for nurses.”

“Ten thousand people are turning 65 every single day in this country, which means escalating health care needs,” explained Niederhauser. “On top of that, there are different opportunities now for nurses to step into new roles like outpatient and transition care. Also, nurses are filling in care gaps left by the shortage of primary care physicians.”

As always, UT’s College of Nursing is ready to answer the call for help. It has enacted a five-year plan to increase annual enrollment in its three programs by 55 percent—going from 800 students in 2018 to 1,250 in 2023. Keeping pace with this growth, the college will also increase the number of faculty and staff members.

“We started talking with the health care practice partners about how we, the college, could help mitigate their workforce staffing issues and came up with this strategy,” said Niederhauser.

However, the college currently doesn’t have the physical space to meet its growth goals.

Currently, UT operates from a 40-year-old 42,000-square-foot building, which houses 79 faculty and 34 staff members and delivers nursing courses to more than 800 undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty members are doubled or even tripled in one office space, and students don’t have room to study or socialize. The college is also bursting at the seams in its high-fidelity Health Innovation Technology and Simulation Laboratory in Temple Hall.

That’s why the college has plans to construct a new state-of-the-art 153,800-square-foot building that will be a home for learning, advising, interdisciplinary collaboration, student activities, and research. It will also include a bigger and better simulation lab that incorporates the growing and changing needs of the populations served by nurses.

The goal is for design work to begin next year.

“This new building will be an adequately sized experiential learning environment for students and faculty. The building will be an inclusive environment that is welcoming to all and encouraging of collaboration, and that supports the growing academic and research mission of the College of Nursing,” said Niederhauser.

With growth and new students comes the need for more student support. The dean hopes to have more scholarships available to nursing students, who are truly the best and brightest—the fall 2017 incoming BSN freshman class had an average GPA of 3.72, the highest of any college on campus, and an average ACT score of 29.

“Right now, we are able to award scholarships only to one-third of the applicants. One of my goals is that as we continue to expand, we are able to also expand the number of scholarships for deserving students,” explained Niederhauser, noting that the college has to turn away many qualified students due to limited space.

The investment will pay off for Tennessee. About 90 percent of the bachelor’s students work in Tennessee after graduation, with an estimated 45 to 60 percent remaining in the Knoxville area.

“We educate great nurses who touch so many lives in our community,” said Niederhauser.

And with the school’s five-year plan, the number of lives touched by UT nursing graduates is certain to skyrocket.
Precious Prints Project Updates

The Precious Prints Project now partners with 10 hospitals and has provided more than 700 families a tangible remembrance of the life of their child.

The sixth annual Sprint for the Prints will be held on September 29 at 9 a.m. in Circle Park. This fundraising event provides opportunity for families, nurses, students, and the community to run or walk as individuals or teams to honor the lives of the children who are no longer with us. Registration is open now—see the next page for details.

Recognition
At the annual National Student Nurses Association conference held in Nashville in March, the Precious Prints Project was recognized as the 2018 Population and Global Health Most Successful School Community Health Project. In addition, UT’s chapter received the award for Service and Impact Beyond the Bedside. UT nursing student Emily Spence, philanthropy chair for the chapter, delivered a podium presentation at the conference about the project. The SNA also holds the 2015 University of Tennessee Chancellor’s Citation for Outstanding Community Service for its work with the Precious Prints Project.

Growth
Beginning this fall, the Precious Prints Project will be partnering with four additional Covenant Health hospitals: Cumberland Medical Center, Methodist Medical Center of Oak Ridge, LeConte Medical Center, and Morristown-Hamblen Health Care System. Students will be busy this fall as they travel to each location providing information to the nursing staff on how to integrate this project into their care for patient families. The Precious Prints Project now partners with 10 hospitals and has provided more than 700 families a tangible remembrance of the life of their child. For further information, visit preciousprintsproject.com.

Fundraising
The sixth annual Sprint for the Prints will be held on September 29 at 9 a.m. in Circle Park. This fundraising event provides opportunity for families, nurses, students, and the community to run or walk as individuals or teams to honor the lives of the children who are no longer with us. Registration is open now—see the next page for details.

Philanthropy Team
The Student Nurses Association recently elected its philanthropy team for the 2018–19 academic year. These students will oversee the continued implementation of the project at our partnering facilities, provide project representation at new graduate orientations, communicate with nursing administration, and organize fundraising activities.

Emily Spence presented the Precious Prints Project at the National Student Nurses Association conference.

Savannah Osborn and Emily Spence accept the Service and Impact Beyond the Bedside award on behalf of the Student Nurses Association.

Fundraiser for the Student Nurses Association philanthropy, Precious Prints, which works with area hospitals to provide a silver fingerprint charm to families that have lost a child.

6th Annual Sprint for the Prints
5K Run & Walk
Saturday, September 29, 9 a.m. | Circle Park-UT Campus
$35 (includes a T-shirt if you register before September 14)
Children under 10 run free
Register at runsignup.com/Race/TN/Knoxville/sprintfortheprints

Learn more about the Precious Prints project at nursing.utk.edu/service-learning/precious-prints-project
The Health Innovation Partnership Program, or HIPP, will foster collaboration between ETCH and experts from UT’s College of Nursing, Tickle College of Engineering, and School of Art in an effort to improve everything from patient wait times to recovery from surgery.

“Innovative ideas help a hospital run more efficiently,” said Susan Fancher, clinical instructor and simulation director in nursing. “We want to help ETCH make even better use of their resources.”

One of the driving concepts behind HIPP is that people in the medical field often have great ideas for improving patient care or processes but seldom have the time and tools to develop their ideas. Sarah Lowe, a professor of graphic design in the School of Art, will teach design process thinking to stakeholders at ETCH—including administrators, educators, providers, and patient advocates—helping to give the hospital the means to develop innovative products or processes to improve care.

Hipp Li, an associate professor of industrial and systems engineering, brings his technological expertise to the project to help develop some of those ideas.

He previously worked with Fancher and Tami Wyatt, associate dean of research and Torbecheer Professor in the College of Nursing, to develop UTS’s Health, Innovation, Technology, and Simulation Laboratory—or HITS Lab—where some training and testing will occur.

Once the HIPP team defines the problem and possible solution, engineering will work out the technical aspects, nursing will focus on real-world constraints and needs, students will test the new methods or technology, and art will help make it consumer friendly.

Li stressed that the first step toward success is having buy-in and understanding at the executive level before taking it down through the ranks, and that they should consider that even the smallest changes can have major impacts—something echoed by Fancher.

“George Herman Ruth once said, ‘Yesterday’s home runs don’t win today’s game,’” said Ewing. “Having hit 714 home runs, Babe Ruth is revered as one of the greatest baseball players of all time, and just as he reinvented his sport we must never stop reinventing ourselves. We must continue to question the norm and develop solutions for our problems. Through innovated ideas, we can effect change in our pediatric environment and may be able to help other pediatric facilities that suffer from the same problems.”

“Wyatt brings experience in innovation labs after touring the country and observing different ways and approaches of doing things,” said Li. “She saw other areas where health care, technology, and innovation were building partnerships and the wanted to bring that here.”

Li also credited Stacey Patterson, UT’s vice president of research, outreach, and engagement and president of the UT Research Foundation, for her support and enthusiasm for the project.

“With contacts in places like Boston, Cincinnati, and Orlando, we can learn from the best of the best and integrate innovation into the fabric of health care here in East Tennessee,” said Wyatt.

Find out the benefits of working at Children’s Hospital. www.etch.com/jobs
More than 100 publications in calendar year 2017 included journals, chapters, books, and internet publications.

FROM THE OFFICE OF Research Services

In 2017, 27 external proposals were submitted yielding $5,353,000 in research funding to date.

There was a 450% increase in the American Academy of Nursing fellows since 2013.

The focus areas in the College of Nursing research model are designed around faculty expertise and interests, current and previous research endeavors, and future funding opportunities. Faculty and staff embrace the cyclical nature of research from discovery to translation, engaging scientists and clinical experts. Much of the research in the college occurs in interdisciplinary teams with internal and external collaborators in a team science approach.

They may look like someone mounted an iPad onto a Segway with a selfie stick, but telepresence robots from Double Robotics are among the most useful new technologies at work in the College of Nursing.

A telepresence robot is as close as off-site students can get to being physically present in a classroom or lab. A small videoconferencing screen projects the student’s face, and a mobile base allows the user to move around, converse with students on site, and meet with groups.

The robots are turning up in several nursing courses and programs, providing distance learners with the opportunity to participate in patient simulation scenarios. They are proving especially beneficial in the RIDE program, an advanced practice psychiatric mental health nursing rotation. The program meets almost exclusively online and culminates each semester in a simulation scenario revolving around interprofessional team management of a mental health patient’s case.

During the simulation, team members interact with a patient-actor in the SmartHome, an apartment-style space that is part of the Health Innovation Technology and Simulation Laboratory. The robots allow nursing students to work alongside their colleagues in nutrition, pharmacy, and social work in preparing and carrying out the simulation. Online students are able to drive the robots from location to location and maintain contact with their team—a big improvement over the Zoom videoconferencing technology of past years, which required that off-site participants log in and out of each space as teams moved throughout the lab.

Lora Beebe, professor and coordinator of the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner graduate concentration, said, “We used telepresence robots in course activities for advanced practice psychiatric mental health distance students to facilitate team interaction and simulated client interviews. We found the telepresence robots far superior to using Zoom for this purpose, as the robots provide a sense of immediacy, presence, and engagement not possible with Zoom. The students loved them, and faculty are grateful to Susan Hébert [simulation director for the college] for providing student training and support in use of the robots.”

Telepresence robots are also being used in both the pediatric nurse practitioner and family nurse practitioner programs. In courses that incorporate patient interviews, history taking, and differential diagnosis, they allow the same experiences to be available to all students regardless of location. The technology has also proven to be a great resource for faculty observation.

Hébert said that faculty in the undergraduate RN to BSN program—which is fully online—are in the process of incorporating the use of the robots as well after seeing their benefits for off-site students in graduate programs.
Grant Barton

The 2018 recipient of the Volunteer Nursing Champion award is Grant Barton. This award recognizes an individual who is committed to improving health care and has made significant contributions to the nursing profession and an impact on the community.

For Christmas of 2010, Barton wanted to create a special gift for his wife, Laura. Working with his two young sons, he created a fingerprint pendant with both of the boys’ prints captured in silver. Laura still says it’s the best gift she’s ever received.

Two months later, after numerous requests, Barton launched Precious Metal Prints. The business has since been featured on Good Morning America and in multiple national magazines. It has grown to include more than 200 different products sold in more than 1,000 stores throughout the US and Canada.

Barton has a BS in biology from Presbyterian College and worked in the medical and industrial fields before starting Precious Metal Prints. He serves on the boards of the Historic Bijou Theatre, the Appalachian Mountain Bike Club, and Knox County Solid Waste.

He was selected for the award because of his dedicated service to the college through the Precious Prints Project, which would not be possible without the donation of his time and talent. His contributions span far beyond the benefit to hundreds of families and nurses: he models community service and philanthropy to students, inspires others to volunteer as leaders in the project and the annual Sprint for the Prints, and has been instrumental in developing strong academic-practice partnerships between the College of Nursing and area hospitals.

The Volunteer Nursing Champion award recognizes and thanks those who, through their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service. It will be presented to Barton during the Nightingala celebration November 9.

The 2018 recipient of the Dr. Sylvia E. Hart Distinguished Alumni Award is Teresa Levey, a longtime health care administrator who recently retired from the UT Medical Center after 35 years of service. She was born in Arlington, Virginia, but has spent her life in East Tennessee—excluding Newport, where she grew up.

Levey received her BSN and MSN in nursing administration from UT Knoxville. She began her nursing career at UTMC as a staff nurse on a medical-surgical unit and later worked in ambulatory surgery and critical care before becoming a nurse manager in 1990. She was promoted in 2000 to director of patient care services for the center’s Heart Lung Vascular Institute, where she was instrumental in integrating the inpatient and outpatient nursing units into the Center of Excellence model. She went on to serve as vice president of the institute for seven years before being promoted to senior vice president and chief administrative office in 2013. In addition, she has mentored many nursing and health care leaders during her career.

Levey is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, Phi Kappa Phi, the Tennessee Hospital Association, and the Tennessee Organization of Nurse Executives. She is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and has served in many officer roles of the local East Tennessee chapter. She has been active in the Greater Knoxville American Heart Association and the Tennessee Donor Services Advisory Council, and she is a supporter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Levey remains active in the community through service on local boards and nonprofit organizations. She enjoys hiking, biking, and gardening. She is married and has two adult children and two granddaughters.

The Dr. Sylvia E. Hart Distinguished Alumni Award will be presented to Levey as part of the Nightingala festivities on November 9.

You are cordially invited to join the Alumni, Faculty, and Friends of The University of Tennessee College of Nursing at the Tenth Annual Nightingala Friday | November 9, 2018 | 6 P.M. Cherokee Country Club 578 Lyons View Pike, Knoxville COCKTAIL HOUR, SILENT & LIVE AUCTIONS, AWARD CEREMONY, AND DINNER ROBIN WILHOIT, MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT FEATURING UT ALUMNUS AND AMERICAN IDOL CONTESTANT DAVID FRANCISCO $150/PERSON OR $1,500/ TABLE RSVP BY OCTOBER 15 ALUMNI.UTK.EDU/2018NIGHTINGALA FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 865-974-2755

Volunteer Nursing Champion Award

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MEET THE ADVISORS

The College of Nursing Advisory Board was established in 1988 to assist in developing plans and strategies to guide the college’s future. It is made up of a group of dedicated individuals interested in sharing the college’s commitment to excellence.

The mission of the advisory board is to assist the college by strengthening and enhancing its relationships with its external constituencies, help promote awareness in the community, share in program development and evaluation of activities, assist with fundraising, and support the college’s continuing education and outreach activities. The advice and insights of advisory board members have proven invaluable to the college as we continue to enhance our reputation as a premier leader in nursing education.

Jeannie Dulaney

HOMETOWN: Knoxville

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND: My past jobs have primarily been with civic or governmental organizations, including the City of Knoxville, Metropolitan Planning Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce. I served for 25 years as director of Leadership Knoxville and followed that with a five-year business development position with the LBMC accounting firm. I have served as community relations director with Knox County Schools for the past three years.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION: Start with Why by Simon Sinek. It provides great insight into why organizations need to try to build a compelling message about why they exist, not just what they do and how they do it.

WHY I BECAME A COLLEGE OF NURSING ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER: As I have told many people, I was both literally and figuratively strong-armed into becoming a member by Joe Mont McAfee. If you know Joe Mont, he does not take no for an answer! But he actually did me one solidified my excitement upon joining the board was meeting the college’s dynamic and visionary dean, Vickie Niederhauser. When I joined, she had only been at UT about a year but already had created a compelling picture for the future of the college. It has been rewarding to help her build the kind of passionate and committed advisory board she needs to help achieve that vision.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I THINK THE COLLEGE DOES FOR THE COMMUNITY: For years, the college has been graduating brilliant, capable professionals who fill our hospitals and other medical facilities with caring, capable nurses. But it has also been doing so much more—developing new and innovative methods and instruments for learning and for patient care, reaching out to meet needs in underserved areas such as Appalachia and abroad, assisting with the health needs of many of our Knox County Schools students and families, and training its graduates to be not only good nurses but nurse leaders.

GREATEST WISH FOR THE COLLEGE: We are on the verge of doubling the capacity of the UT College of Nursing to meet future nursing demands by accepting more of the very qualified candidates who we now have to turn away. So my immediate wish is to be present when the ribbon is cut for that new facility. I also wish, and think this will happen, that one day soon the UT College of Nursing will be ranked among the top in the nation. And I want the citizens of Knox County and our region to know about, talk about, and support our highly ranked College of Nursing and its graduates. We are on our way!

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ADVICE TO COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION: In my entire career, I have heard that a great organization needs a steady and solid foundation. I believe the College of Nursing has that foundation. We are on our way to be number one in nursing education and our graduates are going to be leaders in the industry. It is my goal to help the college get there.”
The interesting life of a nurse researcher

By Lindsey Malkus

Portrait photos by Rush Photo Group

ADDITION. ADDICT. DRUG ABUSE.

These loaded words carry serious social stigma—a stigma Julie Worley, a 2013 graduate of the nursing PhD program, is fighting to change.

So Worley, who co-authored the study “Women Who Doctor Shop for Prescription Drugs,” published in 2013 in the Western Journal of Nursing Research, is careful to use terms such as “substance use disorder” instead. Although even that language is inadequate, she says. “There is no term for ‘prescription drug use disorder,’ so I do at times use the term ‘prescription drug abuse’ because there is no alternative.”

Diverse Experience

Such careful consideration and respect for her subjects and what they deal with is partly a product of Worley’s impressive, diverse, and extensive experience. In addition to her PhD, she holds certifications as a family nurse practitioner, psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, and addictions nurse practitioner. She’s worked in home health, public health, medical-surgical nursing, and pediatrics, practiced in a jail and two inpatient psychiatric units, and had her own private practice in psychiatry—all of which give her a unique perspective on the behaviors of both patients and medical professionals.

But it was her experience prescribing substances for worried patients that led Worley to study “doctor shopping,” a term used when patients with substance use disorders obtain multiple prescriptions for controlled substances from various medical providers—any health care professional who prescribes medicine. While in private practice, Worley encountered several doctor shoppers. So when she was deciding on her research trajectory for her PhD, the subject was a natural fit.

IMPORTANT RESEARCH

Because gender differences exist everywhere, including in prescription drug abuse and doctor shopping, Worley wanted to understand women’s unique experiences. But she first needed to recruit study participants, a task that proved difficult and required ingenuity. “I put up fliers and I did all these other things,” Worley says. “But none of that worked.” So she began attending Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings.

“I would go to a meeting, and they’d let me introduce myself, then afterward somebody would maybe come up to me,” Worley says. “But if I didn’t go to meetings I didn’t get any participants.” It was a long but worthwhile process; she attended more than 15 NA meetings and eventually signed up 14 participants.

BRAVERY AND COMPASSION

“To understand and intervene in a phenomenon, it’s important to understand the experience of the people involved,” Worley says about her research. So once she found her subjects, she immersed herself in their world, which put her in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations. At Narcotics Anonymous, she discovered that men often attended meetings to pick up women. And despite announcing herself as a researcher, she became the target of unwanted attention on several occasions. Some attendees also used meetings to buy and sell drugs, which brought a police presence; people would sometimes stop coming to a meeting.

Worley’s work outside of meetings was more dangerous but also key. She conducted interviews with participants in locations ranging from an empty office building to a halfway house. Alone and sometimes in unsafe areas at night, she put herself at risk to gain her subjects’ trust—risk that paid off.

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Adrienne Branch believes in positivity, and she’s ready to use that belief to help others in her planned nursing career and in everyday life.

The example of a strong, determined mother and a tenacious will to succeed have helped Branch, a senior BSN student, overcome a difficult start, and the assistance of generous donors is helping her build a strong future.

Branch spent most of her early life in Corryton, Tennessee, in a single-parent household. “For most of my childhood, we worried about getting milk and eggs the next week,” she recalled. “My mom has worked her entire life to provide the best life possible for my sister and me.”

Midway through Branch’s first year of high school, the family moved from Corryton to Maryville, Tennessee. Branch discovered that differences in the two school systems’ requirements meant she needed to finish out the year at her old school if she wanted to graduate on time, so she added an hour-long commute to her day.

Her persistence paid off with a 4.0 GPA, and she was able to take a mission trip to Nicaragua that cemented her positive outlook. “I was determined not to let my circumstances bring me down, affect my goals, or change the way I carried myself as a young lady,” she said. “Although I walked through an endless tunnel of negativity and darkness, I had finally found the light and continue to build from this positivity in my life.”

Branch’s conviction and hard work are still at work at UT, where she completed her first year of nursing coursework with a 3.88 GPA while also working as a nanny. In August, she received the Artie Ruth Reilly scholarship, which helps her direct more of her earnings toward daily living expenses rather than tuition and books.

After graduation, Branch plans to work in medical-surgical or emergency nursing, where she can focus on patient skills and teamwork, before applying for a critical care position. After developing her skills and knowledge as a working nurse, she hopes to return to UT to become a nurse anesthetist.

“Shee has always taught me to work hard and strive for the best, even when times are hard.”

She remains equally determined to spend time helping others. For the past three years, she’s volunteered at least 10 hours a month—more in the summer—with the Blount County Second Harvest Food Bank and Community Food Connection. And after spending the past year finding sponsors to donate hygiene and personal care items, she traveled to Haiti over winter break to help distribute them and work as part of a medical team.

“I truly believe God has called me to serve others,” she said. With her dedication and the assistance of the Artie Ruth Reilly scholarship, she is finding more and more ways to live out that calling.
Sandy Cobb first became interested in seizure disorders while working as an EEG technician at the University of North Carolina Medical Center.

Now Cobb, earning her PhD in nursing, is in the first group of students to receive the Tennessee Fellowship for Graduate Excellence. The premier program provides top-dollar fellowships that help UT recruit some of the nation’s best graduate students in all fields.

Cobb said her experience as an EEG tech allowed her to work throughout the hospital and see what piqued her interest.

“I spent most of my time in the ICUs, especially the neuro ICU, and found that the nurses did incredible work,” she said. “I was amazed at the level of involvement nurses had with their patients’ hospital stays and decided that I wanted to be involved in my patients’ care at the same level.”

Cobb’s research focuses on mental health indicators in patients with epileptic seizures as opposed to those with psychogenic nonepileptic seizures (PNES).

“Patients with PNES are often labeled as malingerers or faking their symptoms, and I wanted to show that not only are they not faking their disorder, they also have health outcomes that are often worse than those with epileptic seizures,” Cobb said. “My interest in the topic started when I worked at UNC as an EEG tech, because I dealt with both of those patient populations on a regular basis.”

Cobb is continuing her research into the impact of adverse childhood experiences and depression on disease development and health outcomes in patients with PNES as well as options for therapy.

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Learn more. To see the current nursing opportunities available at Blount Memorial and to apply online, go to blountmemorial.org. For additional information, call 865-977-9659.