

Welcome New Alumni!

At Commencement ceremonies held May 18 in downtown Syracuse, Interim University President Gregory L. Eastwood, MD, and Dean Joyce Griffin-Sobel, PhD, RN, conferred 60 bachelor's degrees, 93 master's degrees, and four post-master's certificates upon graduates of Upstate Medical University College of Nursing. Alumni Association vice president **Archie McEvers, AAS '74/BS '95/MS '97**, welcomed each of the 157 graduates to the association with an alumni pin as they crossed the stage.

Guest speaker Barbara Resnick, PhD, CRNP, was awarded the honorary doctor of science degree. Resnick, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Nursing, is recognized for her innovative work in geriatrics.

Student speakers included valedictorians **Amie Lorini, BSN**, and **Christine Kirkman, MSN/PNP**. Lorini works in the pediatric surgery unit at Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital and said obtaining her bachelor's degree has helped to improve her assessment skills and "to view my patients and families in a more holistic manner."

"Continued education is essential to our futures as advanced practice nurses," commented Kirkman.

"Further strides in passing state legislation promoting the independent practice of Advanced Practice Nurses depend in part on our commitment to continual learning. Changes in policy and law have recently been exemplified in New York State with the passage of The Nurse Practitioner Modernization Act which takes effect on January 1, 2015. The achievement of this milestone answers the charge posed by the Institute of Medicine's *Future of Nursing* [report] for scope-of-practice regulations in all states to reflect nurses' education and training. Our strength as practitioners can give a more powerful and educated voice to nursing as a profession. Our commonality is now an advanced practice degree in nursing. Let's use it to its fullest potential!"

Fond memories are made at 2014 Commencement



College initiative in clinical placement networking

The College of Nursing is working to enhance the clinical experiences of its graduate students. **Bambi Carkey, DNP, PMHNP-BC, NPP, (MS '00)** has been appointed clinical affairs director and Carrie Rewakowski, RN, BSN, has been named clinical placement coordinator. They are working to strengthen and widen community partnerships and clinical resources for nursing students.

"With over 15 years of experience in the Syracuse area, Carrie has developed successful collaborative relationships and has proven to be a resourceful person who will work well with faculty to establish clinical sites that provide appropriate educational experiences for our students," said Dean Joyce Griffin-Sobel, PhD, RN.

For the past five years, Rewakowski was the quality assurance RN for PACE CNY. Prior to that, she was a clinical research coordinator for the VA and an oncology floor nurse at Crouse Hospital. In addition to her position at the College, Rewakowski maintains practice expertise as a part-time oncology nurse. She received her bachelor's in nursing from Niagara University in 1998.

"While we maintain our current preceptors," said Rewakowski, "we also are networking to develop new clinical sites throughout Central New York with a focus on our large programs in family, pediatric and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners."

Dr. Carkey (*left in photo*) joined the faculty in 2001 and received her DNP from Chatham University. Dr. Carkey says her goal is "to develop and maintain collaborative relationships and processes among preceptors, students and faculty, which will coordinate optimal clinical placements and meet the needs of both the clinical agencies and the student learning outcomes."



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The SUNY Upstate Medical University Nursing Alumni Association publishes *Nursing In Touch* quarterly. Distribution is free to College alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends.

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National Nurses Week

Author Theresa Brown speaks about "A Good Nurse"

In celebration of National Nurses Week, the College of Nursing hosted a lecture on May 9 by Theresa Brown, RN, an oncology nurse who shares profound practice insights in her New York Times blogs and other widely read opinion pieces, and in her book, "Critical Care: A New Nurse Faces Death, Life and Everything in Between." Brown, who holds a BSN as well as a PhD in English, lives and works as a clinical nurse in the Pittsburgh area, and spoke to Upstate students, alumni, faculty and staff about what comprises "A Good Nurse."

"In nursing we all aspire to be a 'Good Nurse,' but it is not," she asserted, "a good-versus-bad or a black-and-white issue. We in nursing must take care not to define 'good nurse' as an impossible category that no real nurse could ever fill. Being a good nurse matters; being a real nurse matters more. Part of why we must fix our broken health

care system is to allow all nurses to be fully realized 'good nurses' on the job." Making sure this takes place requires "safe staffing, codes of conduct, flexible hierarchies, streamlined processes, and firing or prosecuting of the bad apples," she noted.

One of Brown's blogs, entitled "A Nurse's View of Health Care Reform," earned her an invitation to the White House where she met President Obama.

The campus event also included a reception and book signing, as well as the presentation of this year's alumni scholarship awards.



Theresa Brown signs her book for Upstate nurse Carmella Mertz.

Students awarded \$15,000 in alumni scholarships

Following the lecture, Nursing Alumni Association President **Barbara Kane, BS '98/MS'99**; alumni board member **Bonnie Miner, BS '94/MS'96/ PMAC '02**; and Dean Joyce Griffin-Sobel, PhD, RN, awarded alumni scholarships to 14 nursing students.

Two new scholarships were awarded for the first time this year. The Gene and Cindy Szigeti Endowed Scholarship was established by the College's respected and longest serving dean, Elvira Szigeti, PhD, RN, to honor her family members. Created by the Nursing Alumni Association, the Nancy A. Lyon Endowed Scholarship was named for a beloved assistant to two deans upon her retirement.

The scholarships are earned for academic excellence, professional and community leadership, and other eligibility criteria. Congratulations to the recipients!



Phyllis Balk Memorial Scholarship

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Nancy A. Lyon Endowed Nursing Scholarship

Georgina Rotzler

Dean M. Janice Nelson Nursing Scholarship

Jeffrey Harford

Colleen O'Leary, MD Endowed Scholarship

Kaitlin Corona

Edgar & Josephine Olson Parental Nursing Scholarship

Janean Stewart

Gene and Cindy Szigeti Scholarship

Cassandra Lord

Special thanks to the generous alumni donors who make these awards possible!

STUDENT RESEARCH

PSYCH NP researches new cocaine addiction treatment

Georgina Rotzler, RN, BSN, FPMHNP-S, CASAC-t, a May graduate of the Psychiatric Mental Health NP program, presented her research on cocaine addiction treatment at Upstate's Charles R. Ross Memorial Student Research Day held in April.

Rotzler's study is entitled, "When Exploring Treatment Options for Cocaine Addiction in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities, Does the Use of N-Acetyl Cysteine (NAC) as an Adjunct to Motivational Interviewing (MI) Promote Long Term Recovery in Persons Addicted to Cocaine?" Investigating this premise, Rotzler concluded that "the evidence-based empirical data clearly suggests that NAC and MI are collectively the new gold standard for the therapeutic treatment of and recovery from cocaine addiction. It is therefore imperative that Advanced Practice RNs, Psychiatric NPs and other providers incorporate the use of NAC and MI into their practices as the new modality for treatment of cocaine addiction."

Research shows about 23.5 million people suffered from addiction in 2009. Of those, only 2.6 million received some treatment,

and of those treated, only 8 percent will remain abstinent long term and free from cravings, Rotzler reported. "NAC's oxidative properties in the glutamatergic system work on the reward and reinforcement pathway to reduce impulsive or compulsive symptoms related to cocaine use and abuse. It is a low risk, low cost, yet promising agent in recovery maintenance; and combined with MI, will show favorable outcomes for long term recovery and elimination of the craving phenomena."

After serving as a Homeland Security law enforcement officer for 14 years, Rotzler entered nursing. "Prior to becoming a clinical instructor, I worked in an inpatient addiction treatment unit and quickly realized that there was a need for research in this field. This experience motivated me to become a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor in addition to my FPMHNP goals. I plan on working with this population long term as substance use and mental health are co-morbid conditions that are more common than not."

Rotzler wants to pursue a DNP and use her study as her capstone project. An alumni scholarship recipient and student ambassador, she was also

inducted into STTI. In June, she relocated to New Mexico where she now works as a psychiatric NP with Presbyterian Medical Services in its Farmington adolescent inpatient facility. She also does outreach work with the local prison. Rotzler served on an expert panel for the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, and is active in the ANA and other organizations.

**Preceptor** *continued from page 1*

To formalize relationships and establish new preceptors, they have visited practice sites in Syracuse, Oneida, Fort Drum, Ithaca, Cortland and the Finger Lakes region.

They stress that alumni are important to the initiative in sharing their clinical knowledge and expertise as preceptors. In turn, preceptors earn credit hours toward re-certification, discounts on College CEU offerings and free access to the campus Health Sciences Library and NursingCentral.com.

Alumni interested in precepting should contact Carrie at 315-464-9828 or rewakowc@upstate.edu.



Shelly Lynn Peters, FPMHNP '16 (center) receives scholarship award from Eastwood Rotary President Bruce Wakker and Alumni Association President Barbara Kane.

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ALUMNI RECOGNITION

She found it a real challenge – pursuing a master's degree for Clinical Nurse Specialist while also raising a family and working full-time – but

Catherine Stephens, RN, CNRN, CNS '11 says, "It was well worth it." She became a CNS in 2011 and was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau.

The CNS degree is very versatile and the education I received has proven invaluable in my career."

She was recently named assistant director of nursing for Inpatient Services at Upstate University Hospital's Downtown campus. In her new position, Catherine helps the director of nursing with the management and evaluation of clinical operations for inpatient nursing units. She also is a certified neuroscience RN.



The most rewarding feature of her career is "working with groups to solve complex problems in the clinical setting," she commented. "I have also had the honor of assisting new nurses at the start of their careers to become valued members of the health care team – an exciting privilege."

Catherine was one of the authors for the 2013 text, *Neuroscience Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*, published by the American Nurses Association and American Association of Neuroscience Nurses.

Debra Crisalli Saure, MSN, APRN-NP '80, was appointed to serve on the American College Health Association Board of Directors, and this May was named a fellow in the ACHA. She is senior director for



Creighton University Student Health Services in Omaha, NE, and obtained her MS/FNP at Creighton in 2013. She was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau in 2011.

Barbara Black, MS, MA, RN, ANP '98, assistant dean for Continuing Nursing Education and clinical associate professor at Upstate, received the 2014 Faculty Gold Standard Award. The recognition noted that much of the College's success in the areas of continuing education, organization and management are due to her considerable energy and innovation since she joined the faculty in 1996.

