

Health Professions Alumni Connection

Health Professions Alumni Association News

Fall 2018

First-time PA endowment: starting a legacy

Hard work pays off! The PA Classes of 2018 and 2019 have worked tirelessly with the CHP Alumni Association to create a first-ever endowment for the Physician Assistant Program. The Physician Assistant Program was the only CHP department without its own dedicated fund...until now.

Sandra Banas, MST '77, RPA-C, Program Chair for Physician Assistant Studies said, "As the program has grown, we felt the natural next step was to establish a dedicated fund to provide a direct way for current students, alumni and others connected to the program to give back. An endowment will provide funding for the program in perpetuity. We need the help of our alumni to help our endowment grow." Banas added, "Ten years ago this program did not even exist and now we have more than 150 alumni, from coast to coast."

A driving force for creating the endowment was Elie Mala, a special friend of the Class of 2018. Elie and the PA students of the Classes of 2018 and 2019 worked with the Health Professions Alumni Association to raise the funds needed. They were able to take advantage of matching funds from the Upstate Foundation to establish the endowment this year.

However, they still need the help of alumni. The larger the endowment, the more



Mary Knepper, Health Professions alumni director, left, with members of the Class of 2018; Jeremy Skiechs, vice president; Samantha Otis, president; Lindsey Davenport, Amanda Liew, Matthew Moyd, class representative for the New York State Society of Physician Assistants; Tony Kurec, Health Professions Alumni Association president; Elie Mala, friend of the Class of 2018, at Commencement in May. Not pictured: Kathryn Shaw

earnings it will generate and have a bigger impact on the PA program. Potential uses may include lab equipment, guest lecturers, and professional development for both students and faculty. Gifts of \$250 or more by December 31 will be matched by the Upstate Foundation and recognized on a plaque in the PA department.

CHP Alumni Board President **Tony Kurec, MS '86, H(ASCP)DLM** said,

"Ultimately, your generosity will impact not only the education of PA students, but most importantly the care that Upstate's PA Alumni continue to give to patients for years to come. This is a terrific accomplishment for the future of the PA program."

To help grow the endowment, simply go to www.upstatefoundation.org/CHPalumni and click "PA Educational Enrichment Endowment" or call **315-464-4416**.

Retiring MIS director continues to teach



"It's hard to believe that 22 years have passed since I joined the faculty in the Medical Imaging Sciences Department. As I reflect on my years in the program and in the College of Health Professions, I feel a

strong sense of gratitude for the invaluable and fulfilling experiences I've enjoyed here. It's been wonderful to know our many fine

students and very satisfying to witness their success in the health care professions.

"I've been privileged to have worked with outstanding professionals: our very knowledgeable and dedicated faculty, the college and university administration, and the many imaging professionals in our program's clinical education sites who generously share their expertise with our students.

"All of these individuals and experiences have deeply enriched my life.

"It has been most satisfying to have had the opportunity to participate in this cause that is greater than myself...a cause that has benefitted so many students, graduates, and ultimately patients. For that I am forever grateful.

"I look forward to remaining at Upstate as an adjunct instructor during the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 semesters!"

David Clemente, MIS '93



2018 Barbara Gonnella Memorial Scholarship recipients Ashley Hein and Valerie Weeks, seated left to right, met for breakfast at the Genesee Grande with former CLS faculty member Wendy Stockwin, Barbara's husband Severin Gonnella, Health Professions Alumni Director Mary Knepper, and CLS Program Director Sue Graham. Both 2018 graduates, Ashley will live and work in her hometown of Oswego while Valerie has a position in the animal lab at Cornell University. The scholarship was established in memory of 1980 alumna Barbara Gonnella. An extraordinary person who led her life with integrity, compassion and joyful enthusiasm, Barbara loved blood banking and fully recognized the specialty's importance in saving patient's lives. This scholarship supports a second year Medical Technology student.

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The SUNY Upstate Medical University Health Professions Alumni Association publishes *Alumni Connection*. Distribution is free to college alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends.

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Family raises funds to endow a memorial scholarship

At the age of 46, Stephen Furgal returned to school for respiratory therapy, forever changing the remaining 12 years of his life. Though his life ended much too soon, Stephen reached the goals he set out to accomplish. His family resolved to honor him by raising funds to endow a scholarship as a permanent legacy. With the help of matching funds from the Upstate Foundation and the Health Professions Alumni Association, the Furgal family proudly established an endowment this year in Stephen's name.



Stephen, first day of clinical

Stephen and Kathryn Furgal raised their three children on 55 acres near Pulaski. As their children got older, Stephen was no longer feeling fulfilled with his job. He decided to attend a shadowing day at Upstate Medical University, College of Health Professions. "My husband always had a plan and knew he had to change with the times," his wife Kathy said. "As our family dynamics changed, he desired a satisfying job that would also provide long-term financial stability," she added.

Kathy supported his decision to return to school at an age most would not consider doing so. "Stephen enjoyed working with people. Though it was not easy to attend school, work and sell our business, we knew it would be worth the effort," noted Kathy. His new career as a Respiratory Therapist proved to be all he desired.

"He developed strong relationships with the doctors, nurses and patients with whom he worked. They truly were a team. We could not have been more proud," Kathy said.

Almost eight years into his new career at a hospital in the Catskills, Stephen was diagnosed with lung cancer. Never a smoker, Stephen developed lung cancer due to second-hand smoke that had billowed in the air of the bar that he and Kathy owned for nearly 20 years. These years proved to be difficult for the Furgal family. Just before Stephen's diagnosis, two of Stephen's brothers had died of heart complications. This forced the remaining brothers to undergo a stress test. Though Stephen's heart tested fine, that is when the doctors discovered lung cancer. Soon after her husband's discovery, Kathy's mother was diagnosed with cancer and passed away. Stephen's mother was also diagnosed with lung cancer.



Left to Right: Luke Connor, his wife Stacy Furgal Connor, Tim Furgal, Ben Furgal, Stephen, Kathy.

Stephen – beloved husband and father, passed at the age of 58.

Stephen and Kathy's children, Benjamin, Timothy and Stacy, along with Stacy's husband Luke, helped their mom through an extremely difficult time, as their family experienced a great deal of loss in a short period of time.

"At the time of Stephen's death, we received many donations through a "Go Fund Me" page that was set-up in his name. We wanted to use the money wisely and help someone accomplish their goals as my husband did. We wanted to give back," Kathy said. They were thrilled to learn that the Upstate Foundation would match the funds raised in order to open an endowment. Their family vowed to provide an annual scholarship while the endowment grows.



Kathy Furgal (left) and Nichole Reynolds, Furgal scholarship recipient, meet at the CHP White Coat Ceremony

The scholarship is to support an incoming, "non-traditional" Respiratory Therapy student like Stephen. The first recipient of the Stephen Furgal Scholarship award, Nichole Reynolds, was announced in August at the White Coat Ceremony, where the two were able to meet.

"There are so many opportunities in the medical field of which younger people may not be aware," Kathy said. "The College of Health Professions is a great medical complex which offers versatile careers that you can take with you no matter where you go. We will always be proud of Stephen and his goals accomplished."

New! Master's Degree Programs Beginning fall 2018:

Cardiovascular Perfusion is now a master's degree program.
Behavior Analysis Studies master's degree program will train behavior analysts to help people with autism and related disorders.
To read all about it, go to www.upstatefoundation.org/chpalumni/currentnews

Class of '01 RT alumna Megan Farrar featured in Times Union magazine

When **Megan Farrar, RT '01** began her career in the medical field, she wanted to follow her passion; to have a positive impact on her patients' lives. Megan wanted to create change and inspire hope while leaning on her strengths of math, science, technology, creativity and patient care. It was through her last clinical rotation within Upstate's College of Health Professions in Radiation Oncology and her encounter with the Senior Associate Dean, Chair

"Their program continues to produce stand-out medical professionals because of Joan O'Brien's passion for the field and dedication to each student's success. Joan is a living legend among radiation therapists for her decades of teaching and inspiring future radiation therapists," added Megan.

From an early age, Megan was influenced by her mother, Kathy Monroe, a registered nurse. While busy with her husband and

"Joan O'Brien is a living legend among radiation therapists for her decades of teaching and inspiring future radiation therapists."

and Program Director at the College, **Joan O'Brien, MEd, RT(T)** who led her to the career that was meant for her. Megan, now Director of Radiation and Imaging Services at New York Oncology Hematology (NYOH), the largest provider of cancer treatment in NY's Capital Region, gives much credit to the College of Health Professions for her success.

"The Upstate Radiation Therapy Program graduates are armed with a variety of clinical studies, experiences, exceptional education and mentorship," Megan said.

three boys, ages 9, 7 and 4, Megan is committed to making a difference in the lives of those she treats. "Radiation Oncology allows me to be alongside my patients through their entire journey of treatment. We support them through a terrifying part of their lives," said Megan.

"New York Oncology Hematology (NYOH) proudly has three designated clinical sites available for UMU Radiation Therapy student clinical rotations. Additionally, NYOH Radiation employs an impressive **12** of Upstate Medical University's Radiation Therapy Program alums," added Megan.



Megan Farrar, RT, Director of Radiation and Imaging Services at New York Oncology Hematology, poses for a picture in front of a linear accelerator at NYOH in Clifton Park, NY (Photo by Colleen Ingerto/For Women@Work magazine, Times Union)

The College of Health Profession's curriculum had prepared Megan for her successes. Megan said, "Joan O'Brien and the entire college are invested in every single student. They are highly reputable and provide boundless opportunities. We are naturally extremely proud of Upstate's programs, their reputation, and accomplishments of so many alums across the nation!"

To read her feature story in Women@Work magazine, go to www.timesunion.com/womenatwork/article/Women-in-Health-Megan-Farrar-New-York-Oncology-12708790.php

A message from the new DPT program chair:



"Hello CHP Alumni,

I am excited and honored to take on the role of chair of the Department of Physical Therapy Education at SUNY Upstate Medical University. I have only


been here a few weeks and I am amazed at the team work, skills and knowledge of the faculty as we prepare for our CAPTE accreditation site visit. I was drawn to SUNY Upstate's PT program because of its great academic reputation, faculty, student/graduate outcomes, and opportunities to collaborate with others in the university medical system. I have been a PT for over 25 years (coincidentally, I went to PT school with our very own **Michelle Dolphin, DPT '07, PT, MS, PCS**), a faculty member for 15 years and chair for 7 years. Most recently I was chair of the PT department at Clarkson University (so I know all about the snow and winters

in Syracuse). My clinical practice, teaching and research have focused on neurologic physical therapy; specifically measuring walking ability and overall participation in people with stroke, development and use of rehabilitation engineering technologies to measure and enhance recover, and determining important change in outcome measures commonly used in people with stroke. I am also active in the Academy of Neurologic Physical Therapy serving as associate editor for the *Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy*.

"I look forward to working with faculty, students, and alumni to continue to enhance the regional and national reputation of the PT department. If you have any suggestions for the program please feel free to contact me at fulkg@upstate.edu."

George Fulk, PhD

Does your employer support the United Way Community Campaign?



And do you believe in supporting the next generation of health professionals in their quest for a quality education?

If you answered "yes," designate your 2018 United Way Community Campaign gift to the Health Professions Alumni Annual Scholarship Fund #613CHP.

Health Professions Alumni Association for
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Sponsored by the CHP Alumni Association

Med Tech • Med Biotech

Tuesday, October 16, 2018

4 – 7 pm • Weiskotten Hall, Room 3256

To RSVP: www.upstatefoundation.org/CLS-Reunion

2018 TEAM SUNY PERFUSION MEETING

Friday, October 12 – Sunday, October 14, 2018

Saturday, 6 – 8:30 pm • CVP Alumni Reunion Reception

To RSVP: www.upstatefoundation.org/cp

ALUMNI REUNION and TEACHING DAY

Friday, October 26 - Saturday, October 27, 2018

Teaching Day at Upstate Biotech Accelerator

To RSVP: www.upstatefoundation.org/rt

Where are our CHP Alumni?

More than 4,000 CHP alumni in the USA—represented in almost every state!

