Playing Through the Rain
VCU School of Nursing thrives during tough times
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Connections is the official magazine of the VCU School of Nursing and is published twice yearly. Comments and letters may be directed to the editors.

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On Oct. 2, more than 40 nursing students, faculty and staff of the VCU School of Nursing participated in the Environmental Peace Walk. During the walk, participants collected litter and demonstrated their support for VCU’s Year of the Environment campaign. The 3.2 mile walk and clean-up effort started at the VCU School of Nursing and ended at the Richmond Peace Education Center.
As I write this, it is literally raining in Richmond. It is gray outside with a light drizzle. It sets the perfect mood as I write my message for the Fall 2009 issue of Connections, whose cover story is entitled “Playing Through the Rain.” That title comes from Dr. Sheldon Retchin, VCU’s Vice President for Health Sciences and CEO of the VCU Medical Center, who used the golfing metaphor of “playing through the rain” at last fall’s Cabaniss Society dinner. He suggested that the organizations who “play through the rain” of these difficult economic times will not only emerge, but emerge stronger. Since then we in the School have taken that as a challenge to be creative and strategic in our approach to state budget cuts.

While we have had to be reactive to determine what to cut from our budget, we have also taken this opportunity to be proactive – to step back, reconnect with our values and envision our future. Using Jim Collins’ “Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great” as a starting point, we have had a series of conversations to define greatness and to identify key factors in achieving it.

According to Collins, one of the key factors in achieving greatness is “getting the right people on the bus.” The receipt of our recent $2.6 million P30 grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research, a division of the National Institutes of Health, to fund the School’s Center for Excellence in Biobehavioral Approaches to Symptom Management is validation that we already have many of the right people on the bus. Key faculty members, who have been with the School for many years, have initiated and nurtured our focus on biobehavioral clinical research, attracting funding, students and a new generation of faculty to the VCU School of Nursing to extend this important work, which is improving health and the human condition through the creation and dissemination of new knowledge.

Also, in this issue we’ve reprinted “The Health Care Challenge: Nurses’ Role Won’t Change,” a Richmond Times-Dispatch column written by Margaret Lewis, president of HCA’s Capital Division, a graduate of our RN to BS program. Her words are a reminder of the critical role that nurses play in our nation’s health care system – a role that won’t change no matter what changes health care reform brings.

In her message, Terri Gaffney, the chair of the Nursing Division Board of the MCV Alumni Association, highlights the VCU Nursing Alumni/Student Connector, a new program that the Nursing Division and the School launched this fall. This program is designed to meet a critical need created by the School’s enrollment growth over the last decade and a half (when I came here as dean the School had just under 500 students; now our total enrollment hovers around 1,000) with no significant increase in the number of full-time faculty members. We have met our instructional needs by employing nurses whose primary jobs are in clinical settings, such as the VCU Medical Center, as adjunct faculty members. While our students are receiving a top-notch clinical education, what has suffered is the individual attention that comes with a lower full-time faculty-to-student ratio. More than 100 alumni signed up to support sophomore year nursing students who are at the beginning of their nursing careers. With time I believe this program will become a hallmark of the VCU School of Nursing experience and serve as a model program for other schools of nursing to emulate.

We are fortunate to have many loyal alumni and friends who make philanthropic gifts and volunteer their time and expertise to support our work. But these loyal few can’t do it alone. I ask you to consider ways you can do to help us “play through the rain.” If you can make a gift, no matter the size, your participation will help send a signal to other funders that our alumni are committed and involved. If you can get involved in the Connector program, help organize your class reunion, invite a VCU Nursing faculty member to speak at your civic organization or anything else you can think of, I invite you to get involved with the VCU School of Nursing. We are stronger when you are involved, working side by side with us to improve health and the human condition through nursing education, research and service.

Fond regards,

Nancy F. Langston, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN
Playing Through the Rain

Like households and businesses around the country, the VCU School of Nursing has felt the impact of the current economic downturn. Our School has experienced multiple budget cuts during the last two years and the market values of our endowed funds, created by the philanthropy of alumni and friends, are down.
Despite the economic difficulties, the School is following the advice given by Dr. Sheldon Retchin, vice president of VCU Health Sciences and CEO of the VCU Health System, at last year’s Cabaniss Society dinner. He suggested that organizations and individuals who will come out of these tough times and be even stronger will be those who choose to “play through the rain.”

Rather than slowing its progress, the School has chosen to continue investing in the people and programs that have led to our success. The School is engaging in substantive conversations about its tripartite mission (teaching, research and service) and the bold, strategic initiatives that are necessary to continue the significant achievements of this School; achievements that would not be possible without dedicated, highly competent faculty, administrative professionals, students, alumni and friends. The School has engaged in strategic conversations about our mission, vision and values.

“Like many other institutions and individuals in this country, the VCU School of Nursing has faced financial challenges and budget cutbacks. However, what has distinguished us in the past in times of difficulty and will enable us to again ‘play through the rain’ is the skill and fortitude that everyone has exhibited as we pulled together to face the challenges imposed by diminishing resources,” said Dean Nancy F. Langston, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN.

During this time of declining resources, the School has chosen to look beyond the fiscal reductions to identify and embrace the strength of the organization as created by “we the people.” In the last year, faculty and staff have engaged in dialogue and deliberations using the book Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great, to assist us in defining what greatness would look like in this complex organization with a tripartite mission.

“We have also engaged in substantive dialogues about how individuals within complex organizations facing significant challenges must and can engage in crucial conversations. We are looking at our administrative structures to assure transparency and accountability and we are exploring new models for enhancing our shared governance. Engaging in crucial conversations and creative thinking will help move our School from good to great,” Langston said.

Although the budget and economic conditions present challenges, the School is proactively planning for the future and examining our impact on our students, our community and the nursing profession.

“We can build on the great history, reputation and people of this School to move us forward,” Langston said.

One way of moderating state budget cuts is to develop additional revenue streams. To that end, the School has created a new position dedicated to research. This summer, Rita Pickler, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, was appointed the acting associate dean for research and scholarship.

“This new position comes at a crossroads in terms of future for this University and the continuing development of this School. We have had extraordinary success in developing programs of research and, in particular, bringing together researchers with rather divergent population interests to form a singular, powerful, and broad focus — biobehavioral clinical research,” Pickler said.

The creation of this position also coincides with an exciting new grant. In August, the School learned that it had received a $2.6 million grant through the National Institute of Nursing Research. This P30 grant will fund the VCU School of Nursing’s Center for Excellence in Biobehavioral Approaches to Symptom Management. Through the Center, the School will continue its focus on biobehavioral research as it examines symptom management across different patient populations.

“The associate dean for research and scholarship can serve as an intersection for those directly involved in the Center’s work and those whose programs of research are still developing. In this role, I can assist faculty, along with their department chairs and mentors, in identifying and using the Center’s resources as well as other resources within the School and the University,” Pickler said.

In her new role, Pickler also supports scholarship among clinical faculty. Over the last few years, faculty have developed scholarly work related to simulation and the other innovative teaching strategies. The responsibilities associated with this new position will support clinical faculty in these efforts and help identify new resources to support this continuing line of educational scholarship.

“Through the creation of this position that carries a responsibility to support both research and scholarship in clinical education, the VCU School of Nursing will continue to...
strengthen its significant responsibility to advance the knowledge base of practice as clinicians and educators,” Langston said.

In addition, the dean, working with the School’s alumni leadership board, identified an opportunity to make a critical investment in the current faculty who have provided the significant leadership in development of our success in biobehavioral clinical research. A number of years ago, the dedicated alumni of the School of Nursing engaged in fundraising to establish an endowed professor position; through the years that fund has grown to a level that would support an endowed chair or four professorships.

Given the budget reductions and attendant inability to open new faculty positions, the alumni supported the School in using those funds for retention of current faculty who themselves have the resumes to be highly competitive in a national market. It is indeed retention of high performing faculty that will enable the School to not only “play through the rain” but be even stronger because of the increased focus on systems and administrative structures that support the work of a highly accomplished and motivated community.

The School of Nursing is working with VCU’s new president, Michael Rao, Ph.D., to identify opportunities to strengthen the program, our research and our faculty and staff. In August, Rao visited the School, toured the building and met with faculty and staff. On Sept. 30, Rao delivered the Jackie Denise Jackson Memorial Cultural Diversity Lectureship. The event was attended by nursing students, faculty, staff and alumni and the broader VCU community. The new VCU president discussed his views on diversity at VCU and in higher education.

**Enrollment**

While budget cuts have impacted the entire university, financial challenges have not decreased enrollment at the School of Nursing. According to Susan Lipp, M.S.N., R.N., associate dean for enrollment and student services at the VCU School of Nursing, enrollment has remained stable and interest in various nursing programs has remained high.

“We continue to receive many applications from highly qualified men and women who want to be part of VCU. Our applicant pool is very impressive with prospective students coming from different and interesting backgrounds. There’s a lot of interest in the school and we continue to see high attendance at our weekly information sessions,” Lipp said.

**Current enrollment figures are:**

- Undergraduate: 654
- Master’s: 261
- Doctoral: 43

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**Alumni**

Our alumni support is essential during tough economic times. While our alumni and friends have also been impacted by the recession, they continue to support the School in many ways. In September, the VCU School of Nursing and the MCV Alumni Association launched the VCU Nursing Student-Alumni Connector program. More than 100 alumni volunteered to support and guide a group of nursing students during the coming year. Participants will assist students by reaching out during stressful times, offering guidance when needed and providing support throughout the year.

**Service**

Current economic conditions have not diminished the School’s commitment to the community. At this time, the School is exploring a number of new programs to bring patient care and health education to those who need it most.

Using funds from an anonymous donor, the School recently employed Stephanie Ferguson, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN to lead the VCU School of Nursing’s Community Nursing Organization in engagement with our Richmond community with initiatives related to reduction in health disparities. While she is still developing the position and goals for the organization, she said her focus will be on the health and success of adolescents in the Richmond area.

“I’m excited to be back at VCU and committed to improving adolescent health and well-being and decreasing disparities in the community through the School’s Community Nursing Organization,” Ferguson said.

Ferguson received her M.S. in 1987 from the VCU School of Nursing and was selected as the School’s VCU Alumni Star in 1991. In 1996-97 she served as a White House Fellow with the Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala. For more than five years, she worked for the International Council of Nurses in Geneva, Switzerland as the Director of the Leadership for Change Programme and consultant for Nursing and Health Policy. She is well positioned to facilitate the work of the School in its community outreach and ultimately the translation of that work into sustainable public programs.

**Looking forward**

Despite the challenging circumstances, the VCU School of Nursing continues to identify ways to improve health and the human condition through leadership in nursing research, education and service.

Through the continuing commitment to excellence visible today in the work of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends the school will not only sustain through this difficult financial time, it will flourish.
By Margaret G. Lewis

It was a Christmas day from yesteryear, and I was a nurse working in the emergency department at Chippenham Hospital. A patient arrived in the midst of a heart attack -- a bad one -- and she was slipping away. Three decades later I still remember the frantic look in her eyes as she clutched at my arm and said, "Promise me I won’t die."

On Capitol Hill and across America, a great debate is now under way about reforming the way health care is delivered, administered, and funded. Its resolution may have sweeping consequences for generations of patients and families to come. But one thing health care reform will not change: the timeless role of nurses, and the bond they share with their patients.

Physicians have always held an exalted position in health care delivery. They always will -- and deservedly so. Their clinical knowledge and skills are the capstone of patient care, and in Central Virginia we are fortunate indeed to have a physician community that ranks among the best in the nation.

But for many patients, a hospital experience is defined largely by nursing care. Nurses are at the bedside day and night, ministering to physical and emotional needs, answering questions, comforting those who find themselves in unwelcome circumstances and an unfamiliar place. It is no wonder that some patients develop a lifelong bond with the nurses who gave them care and support in the hospital.

AS FOR PATIENTS with serious medical problems -- such as my Christmas patient from long ago -- they very often face two powerful but competing emotions: fear and hope. It is against this backdrop that nurses are called upon to pass a test not only of their skills but, more profoundly, of their empathy.

I remember a young man in his 20s who knew he was dying of Hodgkin’s disease. Friends and family members found it difficult to talk with him about his condition, so I lent him my ear and my sympathy as he spoke about what it was like to see his dreams, and his life, ending prematurely.

I remember a young mother who was clinically dead in the Intensive Care Unit, but who was literally returned to life thanks to the valiant efforts of a physician and his nursing team. The tears of joy that were shed by her family when she awoke -- their look of gratitude and amazement — transcended mere words.

Every day in hospitals across this land nurses are caught up in intimate moments of life and death such as these, and in others that are far more ordinary but no less meaningful. They touch patients and families in ways no reality show, no prime-time drama, can begin to mimic. They show respect and dignity to the frail and the vulnerable in the best tradition of those whose names and actions preceded them, beginning with Clara Barton and Florence Nightingale.

NURSES ARE trained to measure and assess a situation quickly and accurately, to develop a plan of action, to execute it and then evaluate the outcome. I learned exactly those things from my instructors at John Tyler Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University, just two of many outstanding nursing schools in our state.

It is training such as this that stands nurses in good stead whether they choose to work in a hospital or physician practice, for a school or an employer, or in some other care-related capacity. And it’s served as a foundation upon which I’ve built my own career managing hospitals and outpatient centers across four states.

If this seems a celebration of nurses and nursing, so it is. In my view, there is no more honorable or noble profession, no greater calling, no better way to earn a living while shaping lives in ways that are obvious and unseen.

Nurses are the glue that connects hospitals and patients, the stuff and substance which separates care that is great from care that is good, ordinary, or substandard. Reform may indeed change much about health care funding and delivery in America. Time will tell. But reform will not alter the vivid, vital relationship between nurses and patients, a bond that forever will exist between those who heal and those who turn to them in times of great need. And for that, we should all be grateful.

Margaret G. Lewis, a registered nurse, has worked as a bedside nurse, a nurse manager, and a nurse executive. She is now president of HCA’s Richmond-based Capital Division, responsible for 17 hospitals and two dozen outpatient centers in Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, and New Hampshire. Lewis is a graduate of the VCU School of Nursing’s RN-to-BS program.

This column originally appeared in the July 27, 2009 issue of the Richmond Times-Dispatch.
The VCU School of Nursing hosted its 6th annual Week in Scrubs: Nursing in the 21st Century, July 13-17 on the MCV campus. The nursing program was part of the larger VCU Summer Discovery program, which invites middle school students to the VCU campus for interactive, educational programs.

Originally organized by Susan Lipp, director of enrollment and student services for the School of Nursing, and Jennifer Sulanke, a nurse clinician with the VCU Health System, the nursing program exposes participants to all aspects of nursing. Activities include CPR instruction, swaddling and diapering in the pediatric unit, surgical techniques and other aspects of nursing and health care.

“This program exposed middle school students to nursing in the 21st century,” said Whitney Carswell, a recruiter for the School of Nursing who also staffed the Discovery program. “The program has gotten better every year. This year, four students came back to do the program a second time.”

Research shows that the middle school years are the critical point at which young people choose careers. Knowing this, the School developed two goals for the camp:
1. To create a positive perception of the nursing profession and eliminate negative stereotypes.
2. To encourage students to choose a nursing career.

Lauren Prosser, a 2006 graduate of the School of Nursing and a nurse in the VCU Health System’s Neuroscience floor, also staffed the program this year. She said the experience was very beneficial to students interested in a health care career.

“This program is fantastic and exposes students to all aspects of nursing. They visited the School of Nursing, the ER and the new operating room in VCU’s new Critical Care Tower,” Prosser said. “The students are so curious and ask really smart and interesting questions.”

Emma Loderick, a 12-year-old from Henrico, Va., was thrilled to participate in the program. “Because of some medical issues in my family, I’m really interested in health care. This week has been fun and I’ve been able to explore different health care issues.”

Loderick, who enters seventh grade this fall, says she wants to be a physician, specializing in pediatrics.

Rachel Murphy-Weast, age 13, returned to VCU for a third year in the Discovery program. She hopes to be a nurse when she grows up.

“I’ve learned what nursing is all about. There are so many options in nursing; a nurse isn’t just someone who hands out band aids in a doctor’s office.”

For more information about VCU Summer Discovery or the nursing program specifically, please visit www.vcu.edu.
Join the **MCV Alumni Association** The MCV Alumni Association is your connection to lifelong educational, career and social networking opportunities. Your continuing involvement with the university is critical to its sustained excellence.

Join now at www.vcu-mcvalumni.org.
Or call 804-828-3900 or 800-MCV-7799

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**Members Can Rent the MCV Alumni House**

New for 2009, members of the MCV Alumni Association may now rent the Alumni House for a variety of uses:

- Receptions – Weddings, Business, Social
- Meetings – large or small conferences, individual breakout rooms, etc.

Call or stop by for details.
804-828-3900 or 804-MCV-7799
1016 E. Clay Street, Richmond, VA 23298

Learn more at [www.VCU-MCValumni.org](http://www.VCU-MCValumni.org).
Shannon Tillar, a student in the accelerated bachelor’s program, learns to use an IV pump.

Anne-Marie Lillyman, a student in the accelerated bachelor’s program.
VCU Welcomes New Nursing Students

The VCU School of Nursing welcomed a new class of accelerated bachelor’s and master’s students in May. These students got a head start over the summer as they were introduced to the Clinical Learning Center and clinicals in the hospital. Our new students come from a variety of interesting backgrounds and experiences.

New traditional and RN-to-BS students joined the school in August as the fall semester began. Many of these students have registered for the VCU Nursing Student-Alumni Connector program which pairs new students with our alumni.

Current enrollment:
Undergraduate: 654
Master’s & Post Master’s: 270
Ph.D.: 43
School Garden Offers Respite for Students

By Wendy Mathis Parker

The School of Nursing Garden, completed last spring, provides a welcome respite and a breath of fresh air from the surrounding brick and glass, stone and steel structures at the southern-most tip of the MCV campus, high above the bustling traffic on I-95.

The 13,500-square-foot garden can be accessed by university students, faculty and alumni through the student lounge on the east side of the new School of Nursing building at 1100 East Leigh Street.

According to Director of Development James Parrish, the garden is planted with evergreens, deciduous trees, shrubs, and flowering perennials that offer a variety of colors and textures as the seasons change. A bubbling brook fountain and a refurbished classical fountain mimic the soothing sounds of a natural waterfall.

“The garden has a lot of heritage elements in it,” Parrish said. “It is anchored by actual cornerstones of former nursing school buildings: Randolph Minor Hall; the original Cabaniss Hall; and a replica of the cornerstone from St. Philip Hall, the dormitory for the African-American School of Nursing open from 1924-1962.”

Nursing students, faculty and visitors can relax in a host of seating areas in the garden. “There are tables and chairs for lunch breaks, seating around the fountain, and a sitting wall at the back of the garden,” Parrish said. “The space is ideal for special events including alumni get-togethers.”

Funding for the $200,000 garden came from private support, including an innovative adopt-a-painting campaign. For a donation of $1,000, an individual was able to “adopt” a painting by artist Baxter Perkinson ‘70DDS, and the donor’s name appears on a plaque next to the painting. Perkinson donated 123 watercolors and many hang near the garden for all to enjoy.

“The garden brings a sense of completeness to our vision of creating artful and healing spaces and places in the new building,” said Dean Nancy F. Langston, Ph.D., R.N. FAAN.

This article appeared in the Summer 2009 issue of Scarab, published by the MCV Alumni Association of VCU. Visit www.vcu-mcvalumni.org to read the complete issue of Scarab and learn about the exciting new changes on the MCV Campus.
Congratulations to the Class of 2009

On May 15, the VCU School of Nursing held its annual Spring Recognition Ceremony to honor 175 new graduates. Those students officially graduated at the VCU ceremony on May 16. Congratulations Class of 2009.

Mabel E. Montgomery Award: Danny Phillips
Marguerite G. Nicholson Award: Christina Gibson
Mayme B. Wilson Lacey Award: Lauren Floyd
Yingling Senior Achievement Award: Kristin Filler
RN Award: Angela Smith
Temple Memorial Award: Dana Taylor
Student Nursing Association Awards: Kristin Filler, Lauren Floyd, Meredith McNeill, Katherine Bailey and Keely Costello
President Rao kicks off VCU Nursing Lecture Series

In September, the VCU School of Nursing launched the inaugural VCU Nursing Lecture Series. While the series is new, the School has a proud history of bringing notable names in nursing to the School to give lectures.

The idea for the School’s first nursing lectureship was initiated in 1962 when Mrs. Anne F. Mahoney, MCV Nursing Class of 1929 and member of the MCV Board of Visitors, talked with Dean Doris Yingling about establishing a chair or professorship. They determined that a lectureship would be most appropriate and Mrs. Mahoney, along with Miss Nora Spencer Hamner, Memorial Hospital Training School Class of 1914 and first woman appointed to the MCV Board of Visitors, co-chaired the committee to raise fund to establish the Nursing Alumni Lectureship (later renamed the Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lectureship in honor of their efforts). Nursing legend Virginia Henderson, who gave the 10th Lecture in 1976, is one of the many nursing notables who have given the Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lecture.

“The VCU School of Nursing honors this proud legacy of shared vision and partnership between the School and our alumni to establish a nursing lecture series that will enhance the educational experience for our students, connect alumni and professional colleagues with the School and share cutting-edge scholarship and ideas with community partners and colleagues,” said Dean Nancy F. Langston, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN.

Jackie Denise Jackson Memorial Cultural Diversity Lectureship
On Sept. 30, new VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D. presented the Jackie Denise Jackson Memorial Cultural Diversity Lecture-ship. During the lecture, Rao discussed the issue of diversity in higher education and at VCU. The event brought together approximately 100 students, faculty and staff from across the university as well as nursing alumni.

Established in 2000, the Jackie Jackson lectureship celebrates the life and work of Jackie Jackson, a loyal and dedicated member of the VCU School of Nursing community for more than 18 years. Jackie served on the VCU School of Nursing’s Cultural Diversity Committee and was instrumental in crafting the School’s cultural diversity statement.

Legacy Lectureship in Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing
On Oct. 28, the School hosted the Legacy Lectureship in Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing. Established in 2002 by four former nursing faculty members (Drs. Lorna Barrell, Katherine Bobbitt, Gloria Francis and Barbara Munjas), the Legacy Lecture-ship brings prominent scholars in the field of psychiatric-mental health nursing to the School to raise awareness of mental health issues and underscore the importance of psychiatric nursing.

This year’s Legacy Lecture was given Teena McGuinness, PhD, APRN, BC, a professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing and 1982 graduate of the VCU School of Nursing’s master’s program.

She discussed access to mental health care and the huge global disease burden of mental disorders, exploring why we need a psychiatric nurse on every corner.

Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lectureship
The Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lectureship, the School’s oldest endowed lectureship, will be held Feb. 10. Patricia Grady, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, director of the National Institute of Nursing Research, will present the lecture on nursing research. The lecture will be held at 4 p.m. in the School of Nursing’s Younger Auditorium. A reception will immediately follow the lecture at 5 p.m. Parking will be available.

Dr. Grady has served as the director of the National Institute of Nursing Research since 1995. An internationally recognized researcher, Dr. Grady’s scientific focus has primarily been in stroke, with emphasis on arterial stenosis and cerebral ischemia.

The idea for the school’s first the state’s oldest endowed nursing lectureship was initiated in 1962 when Anne F. Mahoney
(Cert. '29), a former member of the MCV Board of Visitors, talked with Dean Doris Yingling about establishing a chair or professorship. They determined that a lectureship would be most appropriate. In 1965, the Nursing section of the MCV Alumni Association voted to establish the nursing lectureship. Nora Spencer Hamner of the Memorial Hospital Training School’s class of 1914 and the first woman appointed to the MCV Board of Visitors, co-chaired the committee with Mahoney to raise funds to establish the Nursing Alumni Lectureship - later renamed the Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lectureship - in honor of their efforts.

Alumni are encouraged to attend. You can RSVP by email mcv-alum@vcu.edu or phone (804) 828-3900.

Anne Hamilton Receives NRSA Funding

Anne Hamilton, a doctoral student at the VCU School of Nursing, recently received a National Research Service Award (NRSA) through the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). Through this award, Hamilton is the newest predoctoral fellow at the School. Her research will focus on "Patient discomfort and agitation in the ICU: ET tube movement effects."

Mary Jo Grap, PhD, RN, FAAN, associate professor and Hamilton’s grant sponsor, has been impressed by Hamilton’s commitment to nursing research.

"She is an excellent clinician with an exceptional ability to clearly communicate issues related to clinical practice and its applicability to nursing research. Anne has extensive knowledge of evidence based practice in critical care and is able to successfully interact with all level of staff to improve patient care through nursing research,” Grap said.

Students Receive Ortho-McNeil Scholarships

Congratulations to two of VCU's advanced baccalaureate nursing students, Elizabeth (Tess) Leppert and M. Ashley McLaughlin were selected for the 2009 APNA- Ortho-McNeil Janssen Scientific Affairs, LLC Student Scholarship. In October, Leppert and McLaughlin attended the APNA 23rd Annual Conference in Charleston, S.C.

This is a highly competitive scholarship that is offered by the American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA) specifically to pay for registration, travel, room and board to the Annual APNA Conference. In addition to providing two references (one from a faculty member who is active APNA member and one from their Dean), the students had to provide a brief essay.

VCU School of Nursing Receives $2.6 Million Grant to Develop a Center of Excellence

The VCU School of Nursing has been awarded a $2.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Nursing Research, National Institutes of Health to develop a P30 Center of Excellence in Biobehavioral Approaches to Symptom Management. The funding will extend over a five-year period, allowing the School to further develop its expertise in biobehavioral research.

"Through this grant, the VCU School of Nursing will further expand its research program and strengthen its position as a leader in biobehavioral research,” said Dean Nancy F. Langston, Ph.D., R.N. FAAN. “Over the last decade, our faculty researchers have made meaningful contributions to nursing knowledge and improved health care for patients. This new grant strengthens our biobehavioral focus and supports the work of those researchers.”

Moving forward, the grant will enable to school to expand its research capacity, advance biobehavioral approaches for symptom management, facilitate the work of independent researchers and establish a mature environment for interdisciplinary, clinically focused research.

“This grant is wonderful news for the School of Nursing and its research program. Faculty and staff at the School worked together as a team to obtain this funding. Without that teamwork, none of this would be possible,” said Rita Pickler, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, acting associate dean for research and scholarship.

Scientists for the new Center include Pickler, Principal Investigator and Administrative Core Co-Director; Mary Jo Grap, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, administrative core co-director; Nancy McCain, D.S.N., R.N., FAAN and Debra Lyon, Ph.D., RN, FNP-BC, biobehavioral science core co-directors; Cindy Munro, biobehavioral measurement core director; and R.K. Elswick, Ph.D., data services and analysis core director.

Importantly, the Center will support the work of several beginning researchers in the implementation of their research projects. These nursing researchers will explore the symptoms and impact of fatigue in a variety of patients including women with fibromyalgia, women with breast cancer, pregnant women, women with risk for cardiometabolic illness and individuals with sickle cell disease.

The project directors for these innovative and clinically significant projects are Victoria Menzies, PhD, APRN-BCD; Jeanne Walter, Ph.D., R.N., FAAMA; Nancy Fallo, Ph.D., R.N.; Jolynne Robins, Ph.D., R.N. and Suzanne Ameringer, Ph.D, R.N. Other School of Nursing faculty and staff involved on the grant are Jeannette Acree, Lorraine Murphy, Suzanne McGinnis, Patty Gray, Ph.D., R.N. and Marie Gardner, Ph.D.
Dr. Pickler Receives National Research Award

On June 30, the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) presented its Award of Excellence in Research to Rita H. Pickler, Ph.D., RN, PNP-BC, FAAN, for her excellence in clinical practice and continued innovation in the delivery of care for women and newborns. The award was presented at AWHONN’s annual convention in San Diego, Calif.

Dr. Pickler is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Family and Community Health Nursing. In addition, she serves as the pilot director for the Center for Biobehavioral Clinical Research, funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). Dr. Pickler is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and has received numerous awards, including the Senior Researcher Award from the VCU School of Nursing, Alumni Star Award from VCU, the Shining Star Nurse Practitioner of the Year from the Fan Free Clinic and the Nursing Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

AWHONN presents its Award of Excellence in Research to an AWHONN member who demonstrates a history of conducting federally funded research, published research in peer refereed journals, reflects AWHONN’s goals and standards in their contributions to women’s and newborns’ health nursing research, and demonstrates clinical applications in research.

Dr. Pickler’s current research, funded through a grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), investigates feeding care for preterm infants to reduce hospital stays and prevent developmental delays. Her research has been published in numerous journals, including the Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing, Advances in Neonatal Care, Journal of Perinatal and Neonatal Nursing, and Journal of Perinatology.

"Dr. Pickler’s research is vital to learning more about preterm infants and providing quality care to this vulnerable population," said AWHONN Executive Director Karen Peddicord, RNC, Ph.D. "Her distinguished research improves not only the nursing care, but also the future for preterm infants."

Dr. Pickler holds a B.S. and M.S. in Nursing from the University of North Carolina - Greensboro, and a Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Virginia. She is a member of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the National Association of Neonatal Nurses, the International Council of Infant Studies, Sigma Theta Tau, the Southern Nursing Research Society and many other organizations.

Dr. Tuck Attends Training Course on End-of-Life Care

Nurses spend more time with patients who are facing the end of life than any other member of the health care team. Yet, studies have shown that many nurses feel inadequately prepared to provide the comprehensive care so important at the end of life.

Inez Tuck, Ph.D., R.N., MBA, professor in the VCU School of Nursing’s Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, recently attended a national ELNEC-Core “Train the Trainers” course. This two-day course on end-of-life care was held in Orlando, Fla. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the City of Hope (COH) originally received a 3 ½ year grant (2000-2003) from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop and help implement the End-of-Life Nursing Consortium (ELNEC-Core).

The program entitled ELNEC-Core is for nurses who provided or conduct continuing education courses in specialty areas such as oncology, hospice, nurse educators and continuing education providers. This project is led by Betty R. Ferrell, R.N., Ph.D., FAAN (COH) is the principal investigator.

Dr. Tuck was one of 120 nurses from across the U.S., Australia and Africa to attend this training program. The principal goal of the training program is to provide nursing continuing education providers with information on end-of-life/palliative care and resources to integrate end-of-life/palliative care content into their in-service programs or courses. Course content was presented in several participatory formats including lecture, open forum discussions, small group activities and training sessions.

The training program was conducted by a distinguished faculty of researchers, educators, authors and leaders in the field of palliative care. Topic areas included nursing care at the end of life; pain and symptom assessment and management; cultural considerations; ethical issues; communication; loss, grief and bereavement; preparation for and care at the time of death; and achieving quality care at the end of life.
VCU School of Nursing Hosted 2009 VASSA Conference

On May 27, approximately 70 nurse educators and health care professionals from across the state gathered for the fourth annual Virginia State Simulation Alliance (VASSA) Conference. Hosted by the VCU School of Nursing, the event focused on a variety of issues related to incorporating simulation into nursing education and clinical practice.

According to Reba Moyer Childress, VASSA’s founder and director and faculty member at the UVA School of Nursing, the organization and conference were created to offer a resource for nursing programs throughout the state. While there were national and international programs, there was no state organization to support simulation in education and clinical practice.

“When we started VASSA, Virginia had the highest number of Sim-Man simulators of any state, not counting other high-fidelity simulators used to create simulations in nursing education. Through this conference, we’re teaching our own educators how to effectively integrate simulation in nursing education to ensure better outcomes for our students and patients,” Childress said.

Simulation is also playing an increasingly important role in training for nurses and other health care professionals. “Hospitals have a strong focus on patient safety issues. Simulation is a good way to integrate patient safety strategies into continuing education programs,” Childress said.

Noreen Crowley, a grant writer with the INOVA Health System, attended to learn more about opportunities for funding simulation. At INOVA simulation is incorporated in specialized professional development for medical staff. The VCU Medical School at INOVA is also focused on expanding the use of simulation in the medical curriculum.

Holly Pugh, a nurse educator with the Bon Secours School of Nursing participated to learn more about the use of simulation in nursing education. “We’re trying to broaden the use of simulation in our nursing program. I’m attending the workshop today to learn more about creating educational scenarios and integrating simulation in our curriculum,” Pugh said.

Sandy Voll, director of the VCU School of Nursing’s Clinical Learning Center, was one of eight VCU faculty members in attendance. She’s seen first-hand the importance of simulation in nursing education.

“Simulation allows our students to utilize knowledge from readings and lecture courses in a clinical setting. Critical thinking and priority setting lead to developing clinical judgment,” Voll said. “Our faculty have fully embraced simulation and have integrated it throughout our curriculum.”

Plans are already underway for VASSA’s 5th Conference that will take place next May. For questions regarding VASSA, please contact reba@virginia.edu.

Faculty Notes

Debra E. Lyon, Ph.D., R.N., FNP-BC, FNAP has been appointed to a three-year term as a core reviewer for the Oncology Nursing Society Major Research Grant Program. Lyon was selected for her expertise in biological nursing research methods. She is an associate professor in the Department of Family and Community Health Nursing.

Jacqueline M. McGrath, Ph.D., R.N., FNAP, FAAN was quoted in a recent Advance for Nurses article focusing on infant feeding issues.

During the recent Week of the Nurse festivities at the VCU Health System, Victoria Menzies, PhD, APRN-BC, received the 2009 Nursing Faculty Award given by Nursing Services, in recognition of contributions made by nurse faculty. It was delightful to see the obvious regard and affection the psychiatric nursing staff have for Dr. Menzies based on her work with them. In addition to her contributions to the psychiatric nursing service, she’s a great ambassador for the School in that setting, fostering opportunities for students to have meaningful learning experiences.

Susan Lipp, R.N., M.S.N. has been named assistant dean for enrollment and student services. A member of the School of Nursing staff for more than 20 years, Lipp previously served as the director of enrollment and student services.

Rita Pickler, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, has been named as the acting associate dean for research and scholarship. Pickler was the previous chair of the Department of Family and Community Health Nursing.

Staff Notes

Delores D. Collier, business and human resources manager for the School of Nursing, has been appointed to the VCU Board of Visitors as a staff representative.

Linda Johnson has moved from her position as receptionist for the School to development associate.

This fall, the School added a new part-time receptionist. Rita Chapman joined the School where she manages the phones and offers a smile to visitors as they enter the building.
Committed to Excellence Amidst Budget Cuts

We all recognize that the VCU School of Nursing is committed to delivering excellence in nursing education. However, recent budget cuts coupled with a growing pool of students interested in pursuing a nursing career presents an even greater need for alumni involvement and support. Together our alumni and the School of Nursing have established some creative programs to meet our commitment to the profession and the community, and I welcome this opportunity to share some recent activities of the MCVAA Nursing Division.

Given the nation-wide faculty shortage, the Nursing Division modified our Nursing Alumni Centennial fund to support faculty scholars who have made significant contributions in designated areas. These changes will continue to allow the school to attract and retain faculty stars. The first recipients of the Nursing Alumni Centennial Professorship Fund will be announced later this year.

In addition, the Nursing Alumni/Student Connector (a program to establish unique nurturing relationships between alumni and students to enhance the learning experience) is getting underway. We had a fabulous response from both alumni and students eager to build a connection and enhance their educational experience. Alumni will serve as a source of professional support and offer encouragement and guidance through the challenges and celebrations of the student’s sophomore year.

Finally, the Nursing Division is excited to host the Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lectureship on February 10, 2010 from 4 to 5 pm at the VCU School of Nursing. Patricia Grady, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, Director, National Institute of Nursing Research is our invited speaker. Established in 1964, the Mahoney-Hamner Lectureship honors the contributions of two prominent alumni, Anne F. Mahoney (Class of 1929) and Nora Spencer Hamner (Class of 1914). These dedicated women initiated the lectureship to ensure that nursing students would be exposed to outstanding nurse leaders. Please add this date to your calendar and I look forward to seeing you there!

Again, thank you for your continued support and involvement in the MCVAA. Your commitment ensures that the School of Nursing provides a high quality education for tomorrow’s nurses.

Terri Adcock Gaffney (B.S. ’81)
Chair, Nursing Division Board
MCV Alumni Association
Alumni Notes

Ronald W. Cleveland MS ’09 is a senior nurse officer (SNO) for the Navy on the USS John C. Stennis. On land, he resides in Port Orchard, Wash.

Kara L. Dunn BS’09 currently lives in Fredericksburg, Va. and works as a nurse at Mary Washington Hospital.

Sheila Englehardt PhD ’93 currently resides in Cornelius, N.C. where she is a self-employed consultant. Although she is semi-retired, she works as an appraiser for the Magnet Recognition program of the American Nurses Credentialing Center and holds a co-chair in the Governing Council of the Pathway to Excellence program.

Jodi (Lynn Browne) Filion BS ’93 lives in Virginia Beach and works as an oncology nurse practitioner at the Cancer Specialists of Tidewater in Chesapeake, Va.

Ryan Foley BS ’05 moved to Florida in June of 2008. He works in the ER at Tampa General Hospital.

Carl Goforth MS ’06 has been accepted by the Navy to pursue his Ph.D. He started in August 2009 at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, MD.

Mary Gremp MS ’09 lives in Sheriden, Wyo. where she is interviewing for jobs in child health.

Cassandra Hammond BS ’05 lives in Thornton, Col. and works as a nurse at the Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center. On Jan. 23, 2009, Cassandra and her husband Matthew welcomed Ewan Christopher Hammond, their son, into the world.

Linda Hawkins BS ’08 works and lives in Midlothian, Va. as a clinical coordinator at the Love of Jesus Health Clinic.

Michael Hoerr BS ’92 is the director of Critical Care Nursing at Arizona Heart Hospital in Phoenix.

Shannon (Kinser) McCartney BS ’07 of Locust Grove, Va. got married in June of 2008 and currently works at the University of Mary Washington as a full-time RN.

Katie (Fletcher) Meadow BS ’09 lives in Mechanicsville, Va. and works as an RN at the MCV- Hume Lee Transplant Unit in Richmond, Va.

Kevin M. Shimp BS ’04 lives in Richmond, Va. where he is a clinical coordinator at VCU Health Systems.

Amanda Spain BS ’08 currently resides in Troy, Va. working as a nurse at the VCU Health System.

Helia Tinsley BS ’93 works as a public health nurse senior at Roanoke City Health Department. Helia received a Masters of Education degree from Virginia Tech with a major in Health Education.

Bonnie Togna BS ’09 lives in Midlothian, Va. and is the director of nursing operations at Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News, Va.

Stephanie Neatrou Watson BS ’00 lives in Powhatan, Va. and announces that she got married in January 2009.

In Memory

Miss Julie L. Bounds BS’76
Dr. Rebecca A. Brundrett AS’60
Mrs. Marie P. Bryant BS’47
Ms. Janie J. Clay BS’69
Mrs. Anne B. Ergenbright BS’34
Mrs. Joanne C. Johnston BS’51
Mrs. Rachael B. Rooke BS’37
Ms. Dawn G. Sarver MS’00, BS’98
Mrs. Jo C. Stanton BS’60
Mrs. Carolease B. Wallace, St. Philip Dipl ’38
Ms. Judy G. Webster BS’97
Mrs. Esther H. Westra BS’36

The VCU School of Nursing recently lost two great friends and supporters.

Dr. Waverly Cole, a retired anesthesiologist and active supporter of the School, passed away Aug. 28. Dr. Cole was a member of the VCU School of Nursing Advancement Council and generously supported the fundraising efforts to construct the new School of Nursing Building.

In September, the School also lost Shirley T. Downs. Downs worked for the VCU School of Nursing as the assistant dean of student affairs and management. After her retirement, she continued to support the School and its students. The School’s administrative suite bears her name in honor of a generous gift to the building fund. The Shirley T. Downs Scholarship and Emergency Fund was established to recognize her commitment to students.
The VCU School of Nursing hosted its 2009 Reunion Weekend April 24-27. Many alumni returned to visit the School and catch up with old friends.

The weekend kicked off on Friday with a Tea Party, held in the newly completed School of Nursing Garden. The Class of 1959 enjoyed a dinner at the home of Fran Kay. Saturday’s events included class breakfasts and receptions, a family picnic and building tours. The evening culminated in a reception and awards ceremony.

The 2010 Reunion is scheduled for April 23-25. More details will be posted at www.nursing.vcu.edu.
Upcoming Events

The VCU School of Nursing has several events planned for the coming year.

Dec. 11, 2009
VCU School of Nursing Recognition Ceremony for new graduates
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Siegel Center

Feb. 10, 2010
Mahoney-Hamner Nursing Alumni Lectureship
Presented by the MCV Alumni Association
Time: 4 - 5 p.m. for the lecture, followed by a reception from 5 - 6 p.m.
Location: Younger Auditorium, VCU School of Nursing Building
Speaker: Patricia Grady, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, director of the National Institute for Nursing Research
Please RSVP to mcv-alum@vcu.edu or call (804) 828-3900 for more information.

April 23-25, 2010
MCV Campus Reunion Weekend (Class years ending in 5 and 0)
It is never too early to begin planning for your reunion, and the MCV Alumni Association relies on class volunteers for a fun and successful Reunion Weekend. If you would like to assist in planning your class activities, please email your name, school and class year to mcv-alum@vcu.edu. A variety of fun events will be held at the VCU School of Nursing Building and at other locations around campus.

May 21
VCU School of Nursing Recognition Ceremony
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Siegel Center