Our American College of Nursing Living Legends

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CU Nursing
Fall/Winter 2019

Loretta Ford ’49, MS ’51, EdD ’61, PNP, FAAN, FAANP
Colleen J. Goode, PhD, RN, FAAN
Jean Watson ’64, MS ’66, PhD ’73, RN, AHIN-BC, FAAN
As you flip through the following pages and reflect on the life-changing work emerging from this College of Nursing every day, I hope that you will also ask yourself: What’s next? How can we move this College forward on its 120-year course of transforming the field of nursing — just as the three women who grace our cover have in the past?

As you read about our talented new hires, our treasured faculty and our Living Legends, I hope you sense transformation in the works. As you read about our nurses and faculty working toward equal healthcare from the nation’s capital to the eastern plains to the schools in our community, I hope you feel the energy of our College.

Take note as you read that our students are already solving problems through their scholarly work. Our newest graduates are already working in top jobs, where they are making a difference and saving lives. And our alumni, by passing the torch and inspiring our next generation of nurses, are already strengthening our noble field.

You will see in the pages that follow that we are already boldly transforming health together!

Enjoy.

Best,
Elias Provencio-Vasquez
PhD, RN, FAAN, FAANP
Anthony Airhart’s career has spanned three decades and taken him all over the world. Primarily spent in higher education and non-profits, he has served in a variety of roles, including executive roles in finance and administration. Since 2011, he has been with CU Anschutz Medical Campus. He has served as our associate dean since 2018.

Teri Hernandez, PhD, RN, Associate Dean, Research & Scholarship
An alumna and associate professor of medicine and nursing, Dr. Hernandez wears many hats at our university, including as nurse, educator and exemplary research leader. Her expertise in nutrition during pregnancy and gestational diabetes has gained national and international attention, and her passion for furthering our research program promises a powerful future of innovation for our CU College of Nursing.

Rosario Medina, PhD, FNP-BC, ACNP, CNS, FAANP, Associate Dean, Clinical & Community Affairs
Dr. Medina has served in the academic setting as clinician, professor, director of APRN programs and assistant dean of our College of Nursing. She has done this all while keeping her feet planted in the practice world. Dr. Medina’s dedication has shone through in her practice-based research and in her work ensuring equal health care for patients at our Sheridan Health Care Clinic.

Peggy Jenkins, PhD, RN, Interim Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs
With 35 years in nursing leadership and an in-depth understanding of complex health systems, Dr. Jenkins brings valuable experience to our graduate program. Her dynamic and innovative thinking fueled the rapid growth of our iLEAD program, where she has served as specialty director and instructor for tomorrow’s nursing leaders.

Denise Smith, PhD, CNM, Interim Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs
Dr. Smith holds an in-depth understanding of the national graduate education standards and helped lead the workgroup challenged to address the National Task Force (NTF) on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education Criteria for the College’s national accreditation. She led a full revision of the Midwifery curriculum and successfully led the re-accreditation effort for the Midwifery specialty. With her continued clinical practice, Dr. Smith provides a strong understanding of the dual roles of our graduate faculty.

Laura Rosenthal, DNP, ACNP, FAANP, Director, Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
An alumna, Dr. Rosenthal has taught across programs, including pharmacology, advanced practice diagnosis and management, and the DNP Project series. A proven leader, Dr. Rosenthal served as specialty director and established the Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner program. While working at the University of Colorado Hospital, she helped develop one of the first fellowships for advanced practice clinicians in hospital medicine in 2008.

Continued on Page 5
During her 22 years as associate dean of Clinical and Community Affairs, Professor Amy Barton spearheaded the creation of the University of Colorado College of Nursing’s clinical enterprise. The string of health centers target everyone from Anschutz Medical Campus students to the Denver area’s most at-risk populations.

Barton also earned numerous prestigious appointments and awards, wrote a long list of scholarly articles and books and netted the university $8.5 million in grants during that time.

It appears she listened to her parents.

FATE AND UPBRINGING GUIDE BARTON TO CU

“My parents were very involved in the community, and I grew up with the ethic that to whom much is given much is expected,” said Barton, PhD, RN, FAAN, one of five children in her family. “My parents also worked hard to send us all through college.”

Barton, also the Daniel and Janet Mordecai Endowed Chair in Rural Health Nursing, stepped down from her administrative post on Sept. 1, but remained with CU Nursing in her other roles.

After getting married, earning her doctoral degree in nursing and having two children, Barton followed her husband from Florida to the CU medical campus in 1997.

THE RIGHT MOVE: NEW JOB OUT WEST PROVIDES PERFECT FIT

As a new CU Nursing faculty member, Barton stepped right into the Clinical and Community Affairs leadership position and “loved” it.

“It provides a real balance between the academic world and the practice world,” Barton said of the position, filled by Professor Rosario Medina, PhD, FAANP, FNP-BC, ACNP, CNS. “I have always enjoyed working on projects that impacted patients and made a difference in people’s lives,” Barton said.

Barton’s passion to influence people’s health resulted in:

The Campus Health Center at CU Anschutz. Designed for providing faculty, staff and students with convenient health care, the on-campus clinic offers everything from flu shots to behavioral health counseling.

Sheridan Health Services. With two facilities (one focused on family and the other on youth), Sheridan Health Services provides targeted medical and behavioral care in areas with high at-risk populations.

Belleview Point Clinic. This clinic in southeast Aurora focuses on providing integrated health care emphasizing
wellness and prevention with its advanced practice nursing.

The Center for Midwifery. With a number of private practice clinics in the area, this center provides holistic health care through the pregnancy journey.

“I think that we’ve created a successful, sustainable practice here,” Barton said. “One of the hallmarks of success to this is that our providers focus on the needs of their particular communities and figure out how to create and deliver those services.”

END OF ONE JOB, NEW BEGINNING FOR ANOTHER

While her move marks a big shift for CU Nursing, Barton’s contributions will continue. Her far-reaching success to the rural corners of the state with the generous donations from the Daniel and Janet Mordecai Foundation are making a big difference in people’s lives.

“Because of you (the foundation), we are able to build and strengthen the rural nursing workforce across the state, bringing care to rural communities where people need it most,” Barton wrote in the foundation’s 2019 Impact Report.

Barton said she would miss the associate dean role. “What I will miss most is working with these amazing people that we have on our team,” she said. 

What I will miss most is working with these amazing people that we have on our team.” - Amy Barton

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Barton said she would miss the associate dean role. “What I will miss most is working with these amazing people that we have on our team. Our providers are so passionate about the work that they do and really bring their full selves to that work with their patients on a daily basis,” she said.

FACULTY
Claudia Amura, Asst. Prof. of Res.
Dawn Baik, Asst. Prof.
Danielle Bulinski, MW Fellow
Meg Champion, Clin. Dir. Primary Care/Peds.
Ramon Chaparro, Inst. of Clin. Pract.
Jennifer Dailey-Vail, Asst. Prof. of Clin. Teaching
Maria Figueroa, Inst. of Clin. Pract.
Katherine Foss, Asst. Dir. of Experiential Aimee Herbert, Inst. of Clin. Pract.
Pam Luns, Sr. Inst. of Clin. Teaching
Chelsea Monroe, Asst. Prof. of Clin. Teaching
Krista Ray, Inst. of Clin. Teaching
Sean Reed, Asst. Prof.
Lauren Rhodes, Clin. Inst.
Scott Schmidt, Asst. Prof. of Clin. Teaching
Carmen Stephens, Asst. Prof. of Clin. Teaching
Aimee Techau, Sr. Inst. of Clin. Pract.
Nicole Teel, Inst. of Clin. Pract.
Laura Thielenke, Inst. of Clin. Pract.

STAFF
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Stefanie Brown, Asst. Dir. of Finance
Edith Butts, Clin. & Aux. Accountant
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Katelyn Nolan, Alumni & Communications Professional
Tommy Nguyen, IT Systems Admin.
Celene Padilla Valenzuela, Med. Asst.
Celeste Padilla Valenzuela, Med. Asst.
Andrea Reyna, Medt Asst.
Steph Salazar, HR Asst.
Angela Sanchez, Front Desk Recept.
Sandra Sarabia, Finance & Accounting Mgr.
Nadia Shive, Professional Research Asst.
Elizabeth Stewart, Community Care Coord.
Cheyenne Suy, Med Asst.
Jason Weiss, Research & Pub Sr. Professional
Michele Wilcoxen, Program Asst.
*The list is comprised of new hires and promotions from Sept. 2018 through Oct. 2019.

CONTINUED – TALENT & TREASURE
Bringing Hope to the Opioid Epidemic

By Courtney Keener, communications specialist

Former ski racer Ashley McAuliffe suffered numerous ski-related injuries, including broken ankles and wrists, throughout her career. At age 18, the pain became so intense that she was prescribed opioids to cope. Three years later, she found herself addicted to the very pills that were supposed to help her. Eventually, her physicians refused to fill the prescriptions and she turned to heroin. After a downward spiral that landed her in rehab three times, McAuliffe, now 35, finally found the help she needed at a clinic in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, thanks to an innovative treatment program spearheaded by the CU College of Nursing.

In 2017, Colorado lawmakers passed Senate Bill 17-074, providing funding for a pilot program to deliver medication-assisted treatment to victims of the opioid epidemic. In the program, CU Nursing faculty train local nurse practitioners and physician assistants to deliver treatment at three clinical sites in Pueblo and Routt counties. The treatment is an effective approach to treating opioid addiction, combining medication with long-term behavioral therapy.

The program is just one of many initiatives under the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, housed at the CU Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The consortium is under the umbrella of the Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, established this past summer. The center gives the CU Anschutz community opportunities to collaborate and coordinate across disciplines.

“Our mission is to reduce the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs in Colorado through policy work, programs and partnerships throughout the state,” said Robert Valuck, PhD, the consortium’s director, who is leading efforts to combat the opioid epidemic across Colorado.

“People who live in rural areas are more susceptible to opioid abuse because of socioeconomic conditions and lack of access to mental health services,” said Tanya Sorrell, PhD, a CU Nursing faculty member and psychiatric nurse practitioner who oversees the medication-assisted treatment program. “There’s also more physical labor involved in these areas, so pain medications prescribed for work-related injuries can often lead to addiction.”

Through the program, nurse practitioners and physician assistants deliver a two-pronged approach to help opioid addicts remain sober longer and, eventually, overcome their addiction.

Suboxone, methadone and naltrexone help manage withdrawal symptoms. They also stabilize chemical reactions in the brain to balance anxiety, mood and emotional issues that commonly co-occur with substance abuse disorders. In this way, these medications

Prescription drugs are fueling the opioid crisis.
The program helps them sober up, return to work and their families, and become contributing members of society again. We’re helping them get their lives back.”

- Tanya Sorrell, PhD

For now, the fight against the opioid epidemic endures. The medication-assisted treatment program is just one way that the consortium is making a positive difference in lives as it tackles the epidemic from all sides.

“We continue to face a daunting challenge,” said Dr. Valuck. “I am encouraged by the progress we are making — we are creating innovative programs that are examples for the rest of the nation, we are building centers and programs that will enable us to sustain our work, and we are making a difference across our state.”

This program is one of many at CU Anschutz focused on changing the addiction landscape throughout Colorado.

*This article first appeared in the 2019 edition of Momentum. Reprint courtesy of CU Anschutz.*
Living Legends

By Courtney Keener, communications specialist

“It is remarkable that the CU College of Nursing has been instrumental in the careers of so many Living Legends. Of hundreds of thousands of nurses in the country, and only 116 recognized with this distinguished title, to have our college connected with 10 of them is truly inspiring. I am honored to build on this history of achievement as I lead the college into its next chapter.” – Elias Provencio-Vasquez

It was the mid-’60s when Loretta Ford, BS ’49, MS ’51, EdD ’61, CU alumna and nursing faculty member, forever changed the practice of nursing through the creation of the world’s first pediatric nurse practitioner program.

In the next decade, renowned nursing theorist Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN, established a transformative new model of nursing practice focused on human connection, and the art and science of caring.
In the early 2000s, Colleen J. Goode, PhD, RN, FAAN, and her team at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital (UCH) launched the country’s first post-baccalaureate nurse residency program for new nursing graduates in partnership with the CU College of Nursing and then-dean Pat Moritz, RN, PhD, FAAN. UCH and CU Nursing were one of six hospital/nursing college partnerships that initiated the program.

What these nursing leaders have in common is a pioneering spirit, a visionary approach to health and medicine, and a commitment to investing in the future. They are three of 10 Living Legends with CU connections as either alumni or faculty, recognized by the American Academy of Nursing for extraordinary contributions to the profession and society sustained over the course of their careers. There have been only 116 Living Legends named since 1994, and CU Nursing is proud to have 10.

**INVENTING THE NURSE PRACTITIONER**

In collaboration with Henry Silver, MD, a pediatrician and colleague, Dr. Ford designed and implemented a nurse practitioner program at CU Nursing, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2015. Their work expanded nurses’ roles in health care delivery, leading to rapid expansion of a profession that now boasts nearly 270,000 nurse practitioners who are connected to virtually every aspect of health care — practicing autonomously or working as clinicians in hospitals, long-term care facilities and health care agencies. At CU Nursing, Dr. Ford has furthered her impact by supporting nurse practitioner education through the Loretta C. Ford Nurse Practitioner Endowed Professorship.

**GIVING A FRAMEWORK TO NURSING PRACTICE**

In diverse settings worldwide, physicians, hospital staff, nurses and patients have adopted Dr. Watson’s Theory of Human Caring, a framework for healing practices. The theory provides a unique set of principles for nursing practice, including preserving patients’ dignity, accepting their positive and negative feelings, and co-creating a healing environment. One of the largest health care delivery systems, Kaiser Permanente, has been implementing Dr. Watson’s theory in California for more than seven years.

Dr. Watson held the country’s first endowed chair in caring science at CU Nursing, where she is a distinguished professor and dean emerita. There, she also generously supports caring science educational programs.

**CHARTING PATHS FOR ASPIRING NURSES**

Dr. Goode is known for setting high standards in patient care, training and mentoring new nurses, and charting paths for future nurse managers and administrators alike. Because of the nurse residency program, designed by Dr. Goode and her team, future nursing leaders receive the preparation and foundation they need to enter clinical practice. Dr. Goode’s work paved the way for the residency program’s national accreditation and a Magnet designation for excellence in nursing and patient care at UCH. Today, more than 60 hospitals are using the residency program’s evidence-based curriculum.

Dr. Goode is carrying forward her legacy by philanthropically supporting scholarships and graduate student research at CU Nursing through the Dr. Colleen Goode Fund for Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice Projects.

**SUPPORTING FUTURE NURSES**

Drs. Ford, Watson and Goode are luminaries in their field — brilliant nursing leaders who have transformed nursing practice, blazed trails for future generations of nursing professionals, and made a positive difference for countless patients and their families. Their legacies live on through the many lives touched by their generosity, creativity and care.

This article first appeared in the 2019 edition of Momentum. Reprint courtesy of CU Anschutz.
Amanda Repsher vividly recalls watching flight nurses load her husband on board a helicopter. Less than two hours earlier, his own crew’s helicopter had crashed during a failed takeoff, erupting into a ball of flames and scorching nearly all of Dave Repsher’s body.

As a wife, Amanda found the irony chilling. As a critical care nurse, she knew it could mean the difference between life and death.

“When he got here, he was so critical, they rushed him from the ED to the burn ICU,” Amanda told Theresa Nino’s Med-Surg II class. “By the time he got up there, he had lost pulses in his extremities.”

Nino, MSN, CCRN, clinical instructor in the University of Colorado College of Nursing, cared for Dave during his 397-day stay in the UCH Health University of Colorado Hospital. The highly publicized crash killed the pilot and injured another flight nurse.

Many things united in saving Dave’s life since that July 3 day
four years ago, the Repshers said. However, a chief factor was the wide expertise found on the CU Anschutz Medical Campus and the quality of care they received.

‘I DIDN’T KNOW IF HE WAS GOING TO MAKE IT’

By the time Amanda rushed into the hospital after a 90-mile ride from Frisco, the site of the crash, her husband was through his first emergency surgical procedure in the tub room.

“He was in there for four hours,” Amanda said. “That’s where they make the determination of how badly burned you are and do immediate interventions.”

Dave suffered severe burns over 90 percent of his body, most of them full-thickness burns, some down to the bone.

“I was desperate to be with him, because I didn’t know if he was going to make it through the next couple of minutes,” Amanda said. Her fear was warranted. The burn surgeon told family members he did not expect Dave to survive the night. “And if he does,” Amanda recalled him saying, “it’s going to be a marathon.”

“I was on fire for a good couple of minutes before a fire extinguisher finally got to me and put me out.”

-Dave Repsher

During his hospital stay, Dave underwent 53 surgeries and lost more than half of his body size, going from a muscular 180 pounds to a low of 89. Labeled the “sickest patient in the hospital,” statistically speaking, he should have died.

‘HAD THEY NOT KNOWN … HE WOULD BE BLIND NOW’

“You guys will learn as you go through your burn rotations that you really want to be at a major burn center if you are in Dave’s situation,” Amanda said. Having the burn team’s expertise made a difference in his care, as did having the broad multidisciplinary skills that exist on this campus, she said.

One example, she said, happened the day after the crash. Excess fluid that plagues burn patients was causing Dave’s entire body to swell.

“Right off the bat, he was tanking,” she said. But because staff members were keenly aware of all the complications that could arise, they noticed a dangerous pressure buildup behind his eyes.

With an ophthalmologist right there doing rounds, the team quickly performed pressure-reducing procedures (canthotomies). “That saved his vision,” Amanda said. “Had they not known to look for that, he would be blind now.”

For the next five and a half months, in a chemically induced state of sedation, Dave battled for his life, undergoing excruciatingly painful therapies along the way. He remembers none of it because of the sedatives, mostly ketamine, that Amanda insisted on his having to erase any memories that could haunt him later.

‘I CRIED HARDER THAN I’VE EVER CRIED’

When Dave developed severe bleeding in his chest, things changed. He deteriorated so much after surgery that the team decided pulling back on the sedation drugs was necessary. Suddenly, Dave “woke up.”

“I was probably on fire for a good couple of minutes before a fire extinguisher finally got to me and put me out.”

-Flight for life nurse Dave Repsher with his helicopter before his crash.

Dave and Amanda Repsher out for a hike.
A sense of sadness struck Linda Johnson just before the phone rang. Although it marked the end of a long road, the three-time cancer survivor was facing a breast implant surgery.


Battling her sinking feeling, Johnson answered the phone. Would she join “Dancing with the Broomfield Stars?” a person from her local Broomfield Community Foundation asked.

“I knew I had to do it,” said Johnson, DNP, assistant professor in the University of Colorado College of Nursing and specialty director of the Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner program. She immediately said yes.

DETERMINED NATURE OVERCOMES ADVERSITY

After being partnered with Timmy Merz and making sure the owner of Booth Dancesport Ballroom in Denver was aware of her health issues, Johnson began her dance training — and what turned into an ongoing healing journey. “Linda has improved probably more than any other student I’ve ever worked with,” said Merz, whose athletic background and approach meshed with Johnson’s. “Not a lot of people really commit to going that deep and being that vulnerable, but Linda had no problem doing that.”

Facing down cancer three times might have had something to do with Johnson’s courage.
FIRST CANCER FORCES SELF-CONTROL

In 1993, Johnson felt a small lump on her back while studying for her Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner national certification exam. It was cancer. “I was devastated.”

Until then a healthy mom of three young children, Johnson said the rare liposarcoma sidelined her for more than three months, teaching her self-control and appreciation of life’s little things.

“Not a lot of people really commit to going that deep and being that vulnerable, but Linda had no problem doing that.” - Timmy Merz

CANCER STRIKES TWO, THEN THREE, TIMES

Six years later, a breast cancer diagnosis sidelined Johnson again. After a lumpectomy and radiation therapy, the busy mom of young wrestlers, dancers, swimmers, and soccer players moved on — until a mammogram four years later.

Her cancer was back. This time, doctors recommended a double mastectomy.

“It was summer and my favorite time of the year,” Johnson recalled. “I was deciding what procedure to have, and if I was going to have reconstructive surgery.”

Johnson was also seeing her youngest child off to college and completing her own Doctorate of Nursing Practice program at CU Nursing while dealing with round three of her cancer fight.

ACCEPTED INVITATION TURNS ‘LIFE CHANGING’

Johnson performed her dance debut during “Dancing with the Broomfield Stars” in front of 800 people and loved it. That was supposed to be the end.

But Merz, who sustained a career-ending injury as a collegiate track star and found dancing to fill the void, called Johnson unexpectedly the next day and asked her if she wanted to keep going with lessons.

“I’ve hardly missed a week since,” said Johnson, who still trains and competes with Merz. She said her dancing worked as both emotional and physical therapy.

“It was life changing,” she said, encouraging other patients and students to accept challenges that might seem undoable. “If you really want to do it, you can make it work.”

“It just went from black to white, like a camera shutter,” Dave said. All of the sudden, he knew he was in a hospital bed, attached to a slew of tubes and machines. “I had no concept of the passage of time. I didn’t know if I’d been there for five days, five months or five years.”

“I knew the second he woke up,” Amanda said, “because he looked me straight in the eyes, and he hadn’t done that for five and half months.” Immediately, Dave began mouthing the words: “I want to die.”

“I was a wreck,” Amanda said, adding that her husband eventually passed out, and she walked back to the apartment she stayed in on the edge of campus. “I cried harder than I’ve ever cried.”

The next day, however, after getting some encouraging words of support from his wife and former coworkers, it was, as his wife put it: “Game on.”

‘THE THERAPY TEAMS … HELPED ME GET THAT BACK’

“It was a long process,” Dave said. Severe, full-body atrophy left ever swallowing food again, let alone walking again, questionable.”It was scary,” he said. But he relearned to swallow and to walk “I can’t speak enough of the therapy teams here. They knew how we lived our lives, very active and outdoors, and helped me work toward getting that back.”

‘I LOVE BEING A NURSE. I MISS IT. I REALLY DO.’

Dave has had many firsts since that July 3 day. First time on skis. First time hiking.

Next up? “I’m looking forward to getting back on the river and going rafting and camping,” Dave said. “I think spiritually for us, that’s going to be the biggest milestone.”

Pointing out how hard his ordeal was on his wife mentally, Dave told the class to take care of their families. Talk to them. “I can’t say that enough. Communication is everything.”

Although the students have a big job ahead, the rewards are unlike in any other career, Dave said. “You are the ones who are really going to make a difference. It’s the only field I can think of — medicine and nursing — where people come to you and give you 100 percent trust,” he said. “I love being a nurse. I miss it. I really do.”
Creepy Creatures, Dangerous Stigmas & Deadly Oversights

PREMIERE POSTER PRESENTATION COVERS IT ALL
By Debra Melani

“His is the hardest thing I’ve done in years.”

Those were the words of one of four judges tasked with choosing three winners from two dozen posters lining the Ed2 North-South Bridge on the Anschutz Medical Campus.

All student tracks were represented at the event, which kicked off the first-ever College of Nursing’s Research and Scholarship Symposium on Sept. 6. CU Data Science to Patient Value (D2V) co-sponsored the symposium.

About 75 attendees milled about the poster-lined bridge, including Dean Elias Provencio-Vasquez and the next day’s keynote guest speaker: Thomas Clancy, health informatics expert from the University of Minnesota.

Here is a snapshot of the students’ work:

COMBINING CREATIVE ART WITH CHEMOTHERAPY

Jennifer Raybin, MSN, RN, CPNP
Pediatric palliative care program leader, Children’s Hospital Colorado - PhD Program

A 10-year-old girl smiles for the camera as she holds her artwork — a picture of a dangerous-looking creature — in front of her chest. Plastic tubes poke out from behind the masterpiece, covering her lap. Peach fuzz tops the little girl’s head as she beams up from her hospital chair.

Called a ‘Narwhal-a-saur,’ her creation “might look a bit mean,” the little girl explained in a narrative on the other side of the research poster bearing her photo. “But he is really nice. His sharp teeth and horns contain healing powers,” said the girl, a cancer patient. “When he bites or pokes a person, it doesn’t even hurt.”

After two decades in pediatric oncology, CU Nursing PhD candidate Jennifer Raybin has seen her share of suffering, watching her little patients struggle with pain, illness and the concept of death.

As a lifelong dancer and lover of the arts, Raybin also knows creative work makes people feel better.

“It started with out-patients coming to the infusion center...”

Many people see addiction as something wrong with a person or a character defect rather than the product of their life experience.”

- Linda Driscoll Powers
for their chemotherapy treatments,” she said of her first creative arts therapy (CAT) study.

While their therapeutic drugs slowly dripped into their veins, the children would join in a circle, finger-painting, playing parachute and building popsicle-stick sculptures, Raybin said. “Or, sometimes, they’d beat on drums to get their anger out.”

Raybin upped her research with nearly 100 pediatric patients and their parents taking part in this poster-focused go-round. Parent response suggested improved quality of life for the children, but more research is needed, she said.

And she intends to continue her work, especially as science keeps cancer patients alive longer, Raybin said. “Anything that supports them along the way is going to make a difference.” Her work is funded by the American Cancer Society.

REMOVING BLAME & SHAME IN OPIOID USE DISORDERS

Linda Driscoll Powers (2nd place winner)
BSN candidate May 2020 - Honors Program

A prevailing stigma surrounding substance abuse disorders could cripple attempts at reducing the opioid crisis in this country.

“Many people, including healthcare providers, see addiction as something wrong with a person or a character defect rather than the product of their life experience,” Driscoll Powers said.

That was the premise of CU Nursing honors student Linda Driscoll Power’s study aimed at improving medical assessments of patients with opioid use disorder (OUD) through trauma-informed care.

Using data from a CU Nursing-led, state-funded pilot medication assisted therapy (MAT) program, Driscoll Powers found, among 476 participants receiving treatment for OUD: 23% reported lifetime sexual abuse; 43% reported lifetime physical abuse; and 58% reported lifetime emotional abuse.

The program reaches rural areas of Colorado with high opioid overdose rates and recently received $2.5 million by the state to expand.

“We need to remove the blame and shame and understand more about why some people become addicted to pain medications,” Driscoll-Powers said. “Using standardized trauma-informed screening tools could reduce opioid use in this country and help people already addicted receive better treatment,” she said.

SEEKING THE ‘WHY’ IN LACK OF HIV DRUG ADHERENCE

Nasser Al Salmi, RN, CNS (3rd place winner)
Lecturer, College of Nursing, Sultan Qaboos University - PhD program

When persons living with HIV forget or ignore taking their medication, the consequences can go beyond not feeling well. Non-adherence can cause critical complications, drug resistance and even death.

So PhD candidate Nasser Al Salmi and colleagues set out to answer the “why” so many people living with HIV fail to follow their regimen, a proportion that falls somewhere between 27% and 80% (depending on population and measure).

“When the rate is below 95 percent, it always leads to different complications, and one is treatment resistance,” Al Salmi said.

Many factors, from drug side effects to lack of transportation, can come between patients and their medication adherence. For this study, al Salmi focused on stress and its effects.

While the preliminary study cannot definitively link stress and drug adherence, the results backed a model derived from a CU Nursing bio-behavioral group. The “Two Minds Theory” suggests that low heart rate variability can be used to measure stress, and that stress and fatigue influence daily adherence.

Continued studies and individualized care are important, Al Salmi said, including education on stress management and healthy habits.

“With good adherence, patients improve their biological and immunological response and reduce the risk of severe complications, including death,” Al Salmi said.
Twice yearly the College of Nursing holds Commencement ceremonies to celebrate our graduates. On May 24, graduates descended on the Anschutz Medical Campus to receive their diplomas. Students from our accelerated program (UCAN), RN-BS, MS, BS and PhD were represented. The following special section showcases several members of the class while highlighting their accomplishments, unique interests and talents, and future plans. Discover commencement through the excited eyes of some of our graduates.
an Overton decided to become a nurse after a decade of adventuring and one escapade that brought him close to losing his foot.

An expert mountaineer, explorer, rock and ice climber, Overton said, “Through climbing, everything makes sense in the world. The chaotic environment slows down.”

After graduating in 2007 from CSU with a degree in Political Science, Overton decided to “do something else.” That something else included working for a heli-skiing operation in Alaska, hitchhiking through Europe, and eventually culminated in an international expedition to ascend Nanga Parbat in Pakistan where Overton acted as a climbing medic.

At the time, Overton was EMT-trained, but “not really prepared for what I encountered.” From leprosy to those crippled by polio, dysentery, and frostbite, “the experience was fairly outside my normal practice.” Then, while on the mountain, he developed high altitude cerebral edema as well as frostbite, and had to quickly descend to get help.

Sick and dehydrated, he eventually made his way to Islamabad where he developed Hepatitis A. Unable to leave his bed, parasites began feeding off necrotic tissue in his arms and shoulders. Fortunately, he had amoxicillin and other antibiotics in his med pack, which helped fight the infection. “That was the turning point for me. I felt broken down and alone, and I didn’t want others to feel that way. That’s when I decided to pursue health care.”

When he returned to the US, he started thinking about his next adventure and found that nursing beckoned. “I really felt a kinship to nursing because of the human touch that nurses provide versus what a physician or PA does.”

As Overton finished his BSN, he already had his next adventure mapped out as a nurse with Swedish Hospital. 

“NOT ALL WHO WANDER ARE LOST”
- J.R.R. Tolkien

By Dana Brandorff

That was the turning point for me. I felt broken down and alone, and I didn’t want others to feel that way. That’s when I decided to pursue health care.”
- Ian Overton

Ian Overton surveys the ice before his ascent.
From Guatemala to Dark World of Sex-Trafficking, Experiences Ignite Grad’s Community Nursing Goal

By Debra Melani

After working with a medical team in the secluded villages of Guatemala, Rebecca Harmon finally listened to her mother. Seeing the sick, poverty-stricken people in such dire need of health care, she made the decision to follow in her mom’s footsteps and become a nurse.

“My mom’s a nurse, and she always told me: You need to go to nursing school. You should be in the medical field,” Harmon said. “But of course, being my mom, I never listened to her.”

INTERPRETER STINT FUELS NURSING CAREER GOAL

Unsure of her direction after high school, Harmon began working with an organization that deployed medical teams to foreign countries. Having moved with her parents back to their native Mexico for the duration of her elementary school years, Harmon was fluent in Spanish.

So she completed some interpreter training and joined a trip. “I went to Guatemala for three months and did interpreting for the doctors,” she said. “And I really fell in love with it. I loved being a provider for people who are underserved.”

When she returned, she began her education, entering CU Nursing through the Integrated Nursing Pathway program. “It is such a well-known program, and they really focus on diversity and offering more of an opportunity for diverse students compared to other programs.”

SEX-TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCE CONFIRMS NURSING CALL

The nurturing spirit her mother must have seen came through again, when a good friend of Harmon’s fulfilled a long-time dream of opening a girls’ home for sex-trafficking victims in Denver. Despite facing the demands of a nursing program, Harmon worked part-time in the home for girls ages 12 to 18.

“I was called a direct care provider, so I was with these
Girls one-on-one every single day.” The girls who qualified for the home often came directly from the sex-trafficking world and were highly traumatized and confused, Harmon said.

“It just made me so aware of everything that was happening in our backyard and in places that were literally down the street from me,” Harmon said. “It’s just amazing now that they opened the home how much more awareness there is of it and how many cases we have to turn down because there is simply not enough space,” she said. “There is a huge need.”

Many of the girls were runaways from the foster care system. “It made me just heartbroken. I realized how much healing has to take place with them,” said Harmon, who learned a lot about trauma-informed care during her time working with the home.

EXPERIENCES HELP SHAPE COMMUNITY SERVICE PLAN

“It was so helpful having that mental health side of it. Bringing that into my nursing has been super helpful,” said Harmon, who had to quit her education but intends to continue helping sex-trafficking victims again someday.

For now, her sights are set on becoming a community nurse practitioner and eventually having an even bigger impact on medically needy populations. She and her husband have talked seriously about moving overseas somewhere in critical need of medical care, Harmon said. “We would want to go where we could help even more people.”

Daughter’s Illness Motivates Mathis to Become a Nurse

By Katelyn Nolan

Kathryn Mathis discovered nursing when her daughter Lily contracted viral meningitis, which then developed into a serious brain injury. “I wanted to give back. The nurses inspired me… I don’t think I would have ended up here if Lily and I didn’t have that experience.”

With five children, Mathis learned during the BSN program to balance her family and her education. “My husband is incredibly supportive and excited for me,” said Mathis. Even with support, the balance can be difficult to strike. “I had to change the way we live. Taking off the little loads make a big difference – like dishes. There were some times when we used paper plates because I didn’t have the time to do the dishes.” With advocates in her home and at the College of Nursing encouraging her along the way, she was able to thrive educationally. Mathis specifically singles out Assistant Professor Tammy Spencer. “She is by far the best instructor I’ve ever met.” Spencer reinforced Mathis’ drive to complete her education with reassuring words of encouragement throughout the program.

After graduation, Mathis will be continuing the long process to medical foster care. For her family, it is important to support children like Lily – those who do not have homes but need medical attention at home. Ultimately, Mathis would like to continue to serve the pediatric population with terminal illnesses or severe physical disabilities.

Mathis’ words of wisdom to anyone studying medical professions is to not get caught up in the textbook. She emphasizes that many patients will not fit into boxes laid out in scientific literature. Having empathy is key. “Presume competence in people with disabilities. Expect the best out of people - they are intelligent.”
No one can predict who will make a great nurse, but when it comes to Chantal Dengah, the cards are in her favor.

As with any medical professional, skill and accuracy are required for nursing success, two characteristics engrained in Dengah.

While her coursework on the Anschutz Medical Campus laid a solid foundation for her career that lies ahead, other life experiences — from her first time in labor to her rock-climbing hobby — should play a hand in her success.

**BIRTHING EXPERIENCE TRIGGERS CAREER GOAL**

“I went into nursing to become a nurse midwife,” said Dengah, whose career epiphany came after the birth of her first child. “I hemorrhaged, and the midwife was definitely able to take over,” she said.

Dengah said she didn’t grasp the seriousness of the situation until talking with her caregivers afterward.

“It could have been a bad story. But it wasn’t, because they knew what they were doing. And I realized: OK, this is what I want to do.”

Dengah, who had two more midwife-assisted births, began looking at nursing programs. She chose CU Nursing largely for its rigorous curriculum and rich history of innovation and research, she said.

“It also had a midwifery program, and I liked the idea of having that continuity of education,” Dengah said. “I knew this was the place that I could accomplish all of those things.”

**STUDENT GOVERNMENT ROLE LEADS TO UNIFICATION**

With a BSN in hand, Dengah entered the Nurse-Midwifery Education
program in August, leaving behind her undergraduate years packed with extracurricular experiences.

Dengah, who attended Colorado Nurses Association meetings before even coming to CU through its Integrated Nursing Pathway program, joined the CU Student Nurses Association (CUSNA).

“I fell in love with nursing associations, because I saw how people came together and created change and opportunity,” said Dengah.

Dengah served as president of CUSNA for more than a year, during which she led a successful transition of unifying student leadership between the south and Anschutz campuses.

“I also trusted people to take full charge of their roles,” Dengah said of initiating a roundtable-like leadership style. “I think that produces better outcomes.”

PROGRAM ALLOWS CHANGE: ONE PERSON AT A TIME

Dengah also served as the reproductive work group leader for the DAWN (Dedicated to Aurora’s Wellness and Needs) clinic as an undergraduate. The student-staffed clinic provides healthcare for the uninsured.

“For me, it just continued to underscore that idea that there are so many people who want access to care,” she said of her time at DAWN. “And if we all could just donate a little bit of our time as medical professionals … it’s not a fix, but it’s a way we can at least help this person right now.”

CU CONNECTIONS SHINE LIGHT ON RESEARCH, POLICY

Among about a dozen students selected for the Honors Research Program, Dengah went on to become one of only three who finished. “And we were able to present our research at the WIN (Western Institute of Nursing) conference in San Diego, so that was really cool.”

Dengah worked with her mentor, Lori Trego, PhD, a nurse midwife and military veteran, on a study evaluating the military environment’s effect on women members’ health.

A valuable mentor, Trego helped in Dengah’s decision to not stop at a master’s degree, she said. Dengah will pursue a PhD, and will work to influence public policy, an area in which she was also able to cut her teeth at CU, she said.

As student liaison on the Alumni Association board, Dengah was chosen to represent the university and testify against a bill that the board deemed detrimental to nursing. “It was really a great experience.”

ADVENTUROUS LIFESTYLE TRANSLATES TO LIFE

Although it might seem Dengah is all work and no play, that’s not the case. Dabbling in film school before coming to CU, Dengah has made entertainment connections, singing backup for some of her local artist friends and being part of two music videos.

Her exposure landed her other jobs, including as TV host for an adventure show that had her doing everything from paragliding to skydiving and as a ring girl for a the national MMA, which she still does.

But rock climbing is Dengah’s chief pastime. “It’s my main go-to, my moving meditation,” she said.

“When you are climbing, you have to focus on the task at hand. The climb is challenging, and it’s tricky, and you have to weigh out what your next moves are going to be. You have to stretch yourself mentally and physically to be able to get through it,” she said.

“But then you get to the top and you look down and see all that you’ve accomplished. It’s like, ‘Wow, I did that.’ And you have this beautiful vista. It’s like an allegory for my life.”

Dengah said she is glad she chose CU Nursing. “There are a lot of
Growing up with two heroes — a firefighter dad and a nurse mom — Lindsey Tarasenko knew early on that she wanted a job focused on giving back.

For Martha Grubaugh, there were some early signs, including being the go-to girl in the neighborhood when the area kids got hurt.

Kara Snyder, on the other hand, denied her destiny for as long as possible. Watching her single mom work hard as a nurse while raising her, Snyder vowed early on that she would never join the profession.

Turns out, it was in her blood.

All three women have nurses for moms, something they realized after forming a bond during their doctoral programs. The trio received their PhD’s together this spring from CU.

‘WE HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON AT OUR CORE’

“I am completely inspired by Lindsey and Martha,” said Snyder, perioperative services director of nursing at Banner University Medical Center in hometown Tucson, Arizona. “They have the hearts of nurses. “I think that’s why we forged such a deep connection during our doctoral program. We have so much in common at our core.”

All raised by caring, successful nurses, the trio’s mothers became built-in mentors, colleagues and friends, they said.

“We have a lot to talk about,” Tarasenko said of her and her mother, KimRenee Breen. Tarasenko remembers touring her mother’s hospital with her Girl Scout troop as a kid and being inspired by a preceptor experience her mom set up for her the year before she enrolled in nursing school.

“It had a lot of continuity of care,” Tarasenko said of the clinic where her mother worked at the time. “So the nurses practiced to their full scope, and they were able to practice different roles in one clinic.”

It was that diversity — the realization of the vast opportunities a nursing degree offered — that hooked her, said Tarasenko, now magnet program director for Children’s Hospital Colorado.

‘MY MOTHER IS AN INCREDIBLE MENTOR’

Once they all made the nursing leap, the three women found they had a slight advantage in school: Mom.

“My nursing school was on the same campus as the hospital where she worked,” Snyder said of her mom, Patti Stumbo. “I would come over at lunch time and go over everything I was learning, and she would talk to me about how it looked in practice.

Grubaugh’s mother, Sandra Merkel, said her daughter called often during college, especially when she was excited about something or in need of some emotional or professional support.

“I remember when you called home and...
GET TO KNOW

Martha Grubaugh
PhD

Recipient of the Loretta Ford Scholarship

According to Martha Grubaugh, obtaining her PhD was a lesson in endurance. “Life happens and you need to go with the flow.” And “go with the flow” is what Grubaugh did during the nearly five years it took to earn her PhD. Undergoing a reorganization and job loss at St. Francis Medical Center, then commuting from Colorado Springs to Aurora for a new job at Children’s Hospital Colorado, and working full-time — all while earning her PhD in Nursing with a focus on Health Care Systems. Prior to enrolling in the PhD program, Grubaugh debated for a long time if she wanted to pursue a doctoral degree. Her biggest concern was that her husband is in the military, and she did not want to start a program that she couldn’t finish. Having moved several times during married life, the concern was real. In fact, her husband ended up being transferred to Kansas, then deployed for a year and now is back at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs - all while she was completing her PhD. “The beauty of the program is it’s flexible because it’s distance-based,” said Grubaugh. So, the program was perfect as it only required that she come to campus once each semester for “Intensives” where she connected with classmates in person. “The cohort structure is phenomenal. We came together so well. We know each others’ children and husbands, and in fact, have made life-long friendships. The intensives really helped connect with each other.” Now, what’s next for Grubaugh? After a little well-deserved R & R and some major adjusting to life without classwork, her goal is to continue on the leadership track as a Vice President of Nursing or Chief Nursing Officer.

said you had discovered patients would tell you more things when you sat down,” said Merkel. “Or when you called and said: Mom! I finally got this nursing theory thing!”

Her mother could always relate, especially when they (both pediatric focused) worked in the same hospital for a while, said Grubaugh, vice president and associate chief nursing officer of critical care services at Children’s Hospital Colorado.

“If you had a bad day, or if you struggled with something, she had that context. She had the understanding to be able to kind of just debrief,” Grubaugh said. “Yes, I have colleagues, but there is an inherent wisdom that comes from someone who’s been a nurse for that long.”

Earlier in her career, Grubaugh’s mother worked with colleagues in creating the FLACC pain scale, a widely used pain assessment for pediatric and non-communicative patients.

‘IT KEEPS YOU GROUNDED’

Tarasenko said that talks with her mom, who still works in clinical practice, have really helped, especially since she turned toward research and leadership roles.

“It keeps me grounded,” she said of hearing her mother recount work stories. “You have to stay connected to the bedside and keep that at the forefront of your mind,” said Tarasenko, whose research focuses on reducing stress of the hospital environment for nurses.

“Having that connection and still being able to talk to my mom makes me realize that we have a long way to go, but we’re moving in the right direction.”

‘I CAN’T IMAGINE DOING ANYTHING ELSE’

The moms said they never pushed nursing on their girls, but that they all saw the foundation for being a good caregiver in their daughters.

“Kara is very social. She cares about people,” Stumbo said. “She is a great listener and offers great advice, and she’s very sincere. All of those attributes really are well-suited for nursing.”

“The thing I always noticed about Martha is that she is very intuitive, she cares about people’s feelings,” Merkel said.

All six women agreed: Just as their profession is special, their mother-daughter relationships are special.

“I guess we get to share so much, and we understand each other so well,” Stumbo said. “It’s a profession that is, unless you live and do it, not entirely well understood,” she said. “I can’t imagine doing anything else.”
Erin Blau was first exposed to the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) program while she was pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Nursing degree at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. “I studied overseas and received a tremendous amount of rural nursing training. I fell in love with the role of the public health nurse, and that was it for me,” said Blau, who solidified her career choice by interacting with EIS officers during the dual degree DNP/MPH program at CU.

EIS officers work for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and respond to and investigate outbreaks or healthcare crises in the United States and abroad. “The EIS is most known for outbreaks and communicable disease control and are known in the field as disease detectives,” said Blau.

Comprised of medical doctors, veterinarians, scientists, and nurses, EIS officers balance the public health epidemiology side with the clinical side. Enrolled in a two-year postgraduate program of service and on-the-job training, EIS officers study the frequency and causes of health-related conditions in specified populations (epidemiology).

DUAL DEGREE HELPS NET ‘DREAM JOB’
In June 2019, Blau was called to active duty and currently serves as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. EIS officers have the option to join USPHS Commissioned Corps, which is overseen by the Surgeon General. The Corps’ approximately 6,500 highly qualified, public health professionals work on the front lines of public health, fighting disease, conducting research and caring for patients in underserved communities. Corps officers serve within federal agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Indian Health Service (IHS) and the CDC.

“It’s highly competitive. Each cohort is about 60-70 officers,” said Blau, who calls her job with the CDC her “dream job.” The CDC matches EIS officers to certain centers or topics and stations them at health departments and CDC offices across the country. Blau’s area of specialty and interest is in HIV prevention and working with people who inject drugs. Currently, she’s assigned to the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

DUAL DEGREE OFFERS DUAL ROLE
“I wanted exposure to other public health roles and topic areas. And I wanted to work in an area heavily impacted by the ongoing opioid crisis.”

During the DNP/MPH program, Blau developed, implemented, and evaluated a syringe service program. Data showed how this type of program could reduce HIV, hepatitis C and overdose risks among people who inject drugs.

“The epidemiologic side is very data-oriented. While working for a local health department, I found that I missed the programmatic side, the nursing role. EIS allowed me to combine those skills and passions and use both of them in my day-to-day work,” enthused Blau.

Blau reminisces that but for the dual degree program, she would not have qualified for the EIS program. “The degree is incredibly useful. I loved the emphasis on evidence based practice and leadership. I can’t imagine doing the job I have without the DNP,” said Blau.
News and Quotes *In Their Words*

**SHARON K. BAKER (BS ’93, MS ’95)**
CU Nursing alumna Sharon K. Baker (BSN, MSN) was highlighted Aug. 28 on http://ow.ly/J6m950vZsUP. Read about her experiences as a nurse executive with National Jewish Health & her impressive 40-year professional journey. Her areas of expertise include neuroscience, cardiovascular nursing, pulmonary care, and oncology nursing. She received the Colorado Governor’s Award for Short Stroke Response Time.

**MEGAN CHAMPION (MS ’13)**
CU Nursing’s Megan Champion appeared on 9NEWS with anchor Kim Christiansen discussing the top four vaccinations that older adults need. Megan is a Nurse Practitioner with the CU Sheridan Health Services. Watch the interview now. https://youtu.be/4D32T0UHVtY

**DIANN AND HAROLD EASON (BSN ’69)**
CU alumni Diann and Harold Eason were recently spotlighted by Chancellor Elliman during an Aug. 28 Loyal Benefactor Celebration at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Diann, a CU Nursing grad, and Harold, an engineering and business grad, have been long-time supporters of CU. Read more of their story: http://ow.ly/wHA50v5wN

**HEATHER MENA (MSN ’18)**
For the next 10 months, Heather Mena will roam the jungles and traverse the hills of Ecuador, learning the tricks of the midwifery trade from native women intent on saving their ancestral tradition. Mena, a certified nurse-midwife passionate about integrating her field more widely in this country and theirs, recently won the prestigious Fulbright award for researching the practices and traditions of the midwives of Ecuador. She joins about 2,100 recipients of the highly competitive Fulbright awards who will teach, research and provide expertise for the 2019-2020 academic year. Fulbright recipients are selected based on academic and professional achievement and work on building lasting relationships with other countries. Check out the full story: http://ow.ly/F0VT50wESJZ

**ROBERT SYLVESTER (MSN ’13, DNP ’19)**
Robert Sylvester was recently named the specialty director for the newly re-established Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Primary Care Program at the University of Utah College of Nursing. The University recognized the need for more pediatric nurse practitioners in the Utah workforce because of the state’s high youth population. “I was the Academic Advisor for Robert as he entered the final portion of his DNP program – the development and implementation of a scholarly project”, recounts Sharon Sables-Baus PhD, Associate Professor of Clinical Teaching. “Robert showed such growth as he moved from a focus on caring for his patients as an accomplished APRN to a leadership role with assimilation of all of his classes to developing and carrying out a quality improvement project to enhance patient outcomes. During our advising sessions, we were able to discern Robert’s strengths, goals and abilities that I believe provided the foundation for his re-establishing the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP) Primary Care program.”

Sylvester reflects on his experience at CU Nursing: “I will forever be grateful to the faculty at [CU], for their guidance and constant support.” Read the full article highlighting Sylvester’s work here: https://nursing.utah.edu/blog/2019/08/pnp-blog.php

**KEYSTONE SYMPOSIUM**
Our faculty and staff members joined the 2019 National Nurse Practitioner Symposium in Keystone this past July, where they hosted a reception for Alumni and Friends and shared their amazing work. Topics ranged from antibiotic resistance in treating UTIs to managing opioid addiction in chronic pain patients. Learn more about the work our faculty presented: https://tinyurl.com/y6abvv9

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**Dr. Rosario Medina presents research during the Keystone Symposium.**

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**CU Nursing alumna Sharon K. Baker (BSN, MSN) was highlighted Aug. 28 on http://ow.ly/J6m950vZsUP. Read about her experiences as a nurse executive with National Jewish Health & her impressive 40-year professional journey. Her areas of expertise include neuroscience, cardiovascular nursing, pulmonary care, and oncology nursing. She received the Colorado Governor’s Award for Short Stroke Response Time.**
allowing a boy’s dream of playing Friday night football, keeping an asthmatic preschooler out of the ER, and guiding a young woman back on track to graduation are all in a day’s work for the Sheridan Health Services staff.

Led by the University of Colorado College of Nursing, the services include the CU Family Health Clinic and the CU Youth Health Clinic, where providing every Sheridan School District 2 student equal access to quality healthcare tops the to-do list.

At this year’s districtwide registration, the medical, dental and behavioral health teams from both clinics conducted more than 60 sports physicals and 90 dental screenings for students who might have otherwise not gotten those services.

Staff members also helped uninsured qualified families enroll in government-funded programs, provided behavioral health screenings and connected entire families to services.

“My fear would be that they would not receive health care anywhere if it weren’t for this program,” Superintendent Patrick Sandos said.

CU Nursing-Led School-Based Clinics Change Lives

By Debra Melani
of his students. “Having these services — and having them so near our schools — is just a godsend for our kids and their families,” Sandos said.

**ACCESS PROVIDES EVEN HIDDEN BENEFITS**

Alexis Barrere, MSN, PNP, a career-long advocate of community health who leads the youth clinic, said her program’s benefits are multifaceted and sometimes bigger than they may appear.

“Because of the sports physical, for example, there are 65 more kids from the district participating in sports,” Barrere said. Athletics offer benefits in all aspects of health, including physical, mental and behavioral, she said.

In addition to building fitness, self-discipline and camaraderie, sports help prevent risky behavior, Barrere said. “Whenever you are involved in something extracurricular, you are less likely to be off getting into trouble.”

With an early childhood center and four schools in its district, the Sheridan Health Services youth clinic serves patients from 0 to 22, treating everything from dental issues to depression and anxiety to asthma. The school district has the highest homeless population in the state.

Families can also find services for all members at a primary school based health center and the family clinic.

“Some of these kids would end up in the emergency room for their health conditions, because they don’t have a place to go that is close to their home to get asthma management or mental health management,” Barrere said.

The clinic also helps his students academically, Sandos said. “When you are taking care of those base needs that kids have — health needs, mental health needs, safety and security — they are able to focus where they need to focus.”

**INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE IN THEIR BACKYARD**

The clinic’s integrated healthcare team, combined with its providers’ unique collaboration with nurses and social workers at the schools, results in high-quality care for the students in the district, who often struggle with mental health and social stressor issues, she said.

Providing healthcare within the communities and near the school grounds that need it makes a difference, Barrere said.

“We’re accessing kids where they are, on their turf, in their comfort zone, so they are more willing to come see us,” she said.

“We can have a better understanding of what’s happening at home and in school. Especially with mental health concerns, that collaboration makes our care more complete. We’re not always having a missing piece of the puzzle.”

Schools in the district include the Early Childhood Learning Center, Alice Terry Elementary, Fort Logan Northgate 3-8, Sheridan High School and SOAR Academy. Uninsured families pay on a salary-based sliding scale.

**MAKING ‘GREAT THINGS HAPPEN’**

The medical and behavior health providers often work together as a team with patients. Just the other day, Barrere said, a young woman that she and Anna Pudgett Seigel, LCSW, have been working with for a year and half shared an essay with them that she had written for a senior class project.

“She talked about her self-exploration that she came to through counseling and how thankful she is for the services because of where she is now.” The young woman plans to continue school and become a behavioral health therapist for adolescents, Barrere said.

“That’s a perfect example of what we do here and why it’s so important. It’s definitely not overnight, but there are a lot of success stories.”

Sandos said he has always been impressed with the care the clinic’s staff provides and that they obviously care about their patients. “I have a big sign in our office that says ‘kids first,’ and I think that’s their thought, too. So when folks’ thoughts are aligned like that, great things happen.”
For Iris Heidenfelder, nursing is in her blood. Her maternal grandmother, Katherine Peterson (now known as Katherine Enloe-Miller), was a diploma nurse and graduated from the Mercy Hospital Program in the 1960s. Encouraged by a physician, Enloe-Miller applied twice to the University of Colorado School of Nursing’s Nurse Practitioner program and graduated in 1971.

“Medicine was a closed club then, but eventually the physicians started to accept me,” Enloe-Miller recalled. During her career, she even taught medical school residents and was a faculty member at CU School of Medicine. In 2006, she retired, but the lure of nursing drew her back. “I failed retirement, so six months later I went back and worked in mental health nursing,” said Enloe-Miller.

In addition to her grandmother being a nurse, Heidenfelder’s mother is a medical transcriptionist. So, medicine has been a fixture in her life. “Ever since I can remember, I wanted to do something in healthcare,” said Heidenfelder. In fact, she got her first set of scrubs at the age of 5 and practiced on stuffed animals. Her family called her “Dr. Season.”

“CU was the only school I wanted. I wanted to come here so bad,” said Heidenfelder. “It’s true that my grandmother influenced me. She has such a passion for what she does, but it’s the incredible history of the College that is also part of the draw. The research is amazing, and the reputation speaks for itself.”

Heidenfelder’s enthusiasm is contagious. “At CU, all the things I was waiting to learn about I’m learning now.” Moreover, for Enloe-Miller, the thrill of seeing her granddaughter inducted as a student into the program was a moment she will never forget. “I was so proud,” said Enloe-Miller.