Taking Care of Business.
Nurse entrepreneurs improve patient care by empowering themselves.
FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to the latest edition of Cura Personalis. This has been an exciting year. We are privileged that Dr. Nancy Brickhouse joined Saint Louis University as the new provost. Dr. Brickhouse has spent more than 27 years in higher education at the University of Delaware where she held several leadership roles, including deputy provost for academic affairs, deputy dean of the College of Education and Human Development, and director of the School of Education. An internationally known researcher, she was an investigator on more than $10 million in funded projects. As SLU’s chief academic officer, Dr. Brickhouse oversees most of the University’s educational, research and enrollment efforts. We welcome her vision for the academic units of Saint Louis University, specifically nursing.

I’m also pleased to share with you that our scheduled Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accreditation visit was quite successful. The School received the full 10-year accreditation. We continue to have a robust enrollment and exceptionally high nurse licensure and certification pass rates, exceeding the state and national means.

This issue of Cura Personalis focuses on two initiatives from Saint Louis University’s new strategic plan, “Magis!”: “nurturing a culture of excellence, effectiveness, and efficiency deeply rooted in our institutional mission and Catholic, Jesuit values” and “being an innovator and entrepreneur in all that we do.” You will read stories about our greatest assets — our faculty and students.

For instance, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. JoAnn Dodgson as our newest endowed professor. The generous gift to endow the professorship was made possible by Mr. and Mrs. Homak, whose story is an excellent example of how one act of kindness sparks another.

I’m ever amazed by our students as they embrace the Jesuit ideal of service to others. Whether they work to ensure that SLU employees are safe during bioterror attacks by learning to dispense medications or serve those who are most in need, they demonstrate strong character and a commitment to others. And they pass on their love of SLU, as you will read in the story about alumna Elsie Roth inspiring her granddaughter Emily Roth to attend our School of Nursing.
"We were very pleased with the results," said David Reddick, a SLU information technology governance analyst and one of three SLU employees who guided the project. "When you set up and operate a closed POD, you’re going to be saving lives."

A POD is a "point of dispensing" location that gives out prescription drugs in the event an influenza, tuberculosis, plague or similar biology is turned into weapons and unleashed on unsuspecting residents.

SLU worked for two years with the city health department’s emergency preparedness planner in designing the distribution protocol and orchestrating the Oct. 27 drill. The group now is confident that if it were necessary, SLU could give out 50,000 bottles of medication to between 20,000 and 24,000 people affiliated with the University within a 24-hour period.

"It was great to see so many people volunteering for the exercise," said Deborah Artran, M.S.N. R.N., an instructor in the School of Nursing, who served on the leadership team for the project. "We’re all geared toward service, which is part of SLU’s mission. It’s why we had such a good turnout to help"

SLU qualified as a closed POD because it teaches specific emergency drug-dispensing skills to all nursing students in the traditional four-year bachelor’s, accelerated bachelor’s and accelerated master’s nursing programs. The nursing students make an integral contribution in protecting the University community because they are accustomed to treating patients. Artran, who teaches the course, said SLU has prepared more than 300 nursing students, who are credentialed to distribute medication in case of a bioterror attack, wherever they live.

Verna Hendricks-Ferguson, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor of nursing, and Helen Lach, Ph.D., R.N., are partners on the cardiology floor at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital. "We were very pleased with the drill," said Lach, who teaches the Evidence-Based Practice course, "As a nurse, I was very inspired to do a peer-to-peer recognition award given to employees who demonstrate professionalism and behavior congruent with the University’s Ignition ideal. SLU Stars were honored for regularly going above and beyond in ways that touch the lives of those with whom they interact daily."

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DEPLOYED FATHER WATCHES HIS DAUGHTER GRADUATE

Although he was more than 7,000 miles away, Chief Warrant Officer Mark Ziegler, Ohio National Guard and Blackhawk Aviation Safety Officer, said he had the best seat in the house for his daughter’s graduation from the School of Nursing in May.

Ziegler was deployed to Kuwait in the spring of 2015 and could not get leave to attend his daughter Ashley Ziegler’s commencement ceremony. So, Ashley Ziegler reached out to SLU’s Nursing faculty and Chief Ziegler’s friends reached out to retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Michael Bamber, program director for SLU’s military outreach program, for help.

Staff members with SLU’s Information Technology Services were able to set up a computer, camera and network line at the Chaifetz Arena to stream the commencement ceremony to a quiet room at the Missouri Student Veterans Association (MSVA) in Kuwait.

After the ceremony, Chief Ziegler sent a plaque to those who arranged the video relay. The plaque displays a 2015 Task Force Pole Rider military patch and reads "Saint Louis University School of Nursing Commencement May 2015. YOU HELP MAKE IT POSSIBLE. THANK YOU. CTJ's Mark Ziegler.”

“Chief Ziegler is serving our country,” Bamber said. “We should do what we can for deployed parents of our graduating students.”

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In September the American Heart Association (AHA) presented Devilra Stallings, Ph.D., R.N., assistant professor, the 2015 St. Louis Mission Impact Award for Power to End Stroke. The Power to End Stroke program is a national campaign to help all Americans to recognize and take the first step to reduce the risk of stroke. Stallings is in-co-chair of the AHA’s Health Impact Committee for the St. Louis Multicultural Initiatives. The committee exceeded its goal of reaching more than 35,000 individuals through heart disease and stroke prevention awareness and education programs, and Hands Only CPR training.

“When I graduated, I knew I would be spending the majority of my time in a hospital,” said Roth, who spent her entire career working overseas. “The streets were for me, and SLU prepared me to work wherever I felt I was needed.”

This is why Roth said she is incredibly proud that her granddaughter, Emily Philips-Roth, chose SLU School of Nursing to pursue her degree. Philips-Roth, 26, is in the accelerated B.S.N. program and works as a care partner on the cardiology floor at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital.

“I grew up on my grandmother’s stories about her work in the field and her days at SLU,” Philips-Roth said. “I have such respect for the nursing school and her professors. I knew I would get a good education there, and I would get clinical experience in a variety of settings.”

Philips-Roth visits her 86-year-old grandmother every Friday to help with household chores and visit her cousin. Although Philips-Roth prefers the acute care setting to public health nursing, she talks with her grandmother about balancing work, school and a personal life. Roth was 50 years old when she enrolled in the nursing school.

“She started nursing school after her husband died and she had five children at home,” Philips-Roth said. “I didn’t start as late as she’s had, but much on my plate, but I’m older than most of my classmates. I have additional responsibilities outside of school. My grandmother appreciated that and understands what it’s like to be an adult learner.”

The School of Nursing no longer awards pins upon graduation, but Roth did not want the tradition to die for her granddaughter. She gave her a pin that says “Nursing: Setting the Standard for Excellence,” which Philips-Roth wears on her coat.
2015 WHITE COAT CEREMONY

Homecoming and Family Weekend 2015 not only was an opportunity to welcome alumni back to campus—it was an opportunity for formally welcome the Class of 2016 into the nursing profession.

The School of Nursing chose Homecoming and Family Weekend for its second annual White Coat Ceremony, which marks a sophomore student’s entrance into the field as he or she prepares for clinical rotations.

During a ceremony at St. Francis Xavier College Church, family and friends watched as students received their white coats and messages from University faculty and staff.

“This white coat signifies your commitment to the profession,” said Teri A. Murren, ’97, Ph.D., A.PHN-B.C., R.N., F.A.A.N., dean of the School of Nursing. “It is a visual reminder of your promise to provide patients with high quality, compassionate and humanistic care.”

Ras Schroeder, M.S., R.N., vice president of nursing at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital, told students that nursing will challenge them to learn every day.

“And remember,” he said. “You always will be on stage. When you put on that white coat, people will look to you. They won’t know the difference between a student nurse and a nurse, so whether you’re in a patient room or a hospital elevator, keep compassion in your voice at all times.”

St. Louis native, SLU graduate and nationally known inspirational speaker, John O’Leary, delivered the keynote address. When he was 9 years old, O’Leary’s curiosity about gasoline and fire resulted in an accident that left him with burns over 80 percent of his body. He spent five months in the hospital and underwent dozens of surgeries. He had to learn to walk, write and feed himself again. O’Leary said he persevered because others served and inspired him, especially his nurses.

“I loved my doctors, my chaplains, my physical therapists, my speech therapists, my social workers, but I loved nobody more than my nurses,” he said.

O’Leary said one of his nurses in particular changed his life the day he had surgery to amputate his fingers. The nurse stopped by his room at the end of her long shift.

“She didn’t try to talk me out of my pain or my grief,” he said. “Instead she sat on the bed and said, John, you may never be a court reporter, but you could be a judge. You may never play for the Cardinals, but you can be a general manager. You may never be a construction worker, but you can run a company that hires construction workers. You’ve lost your fingers, but you haven’t lost your voice. I realized she was right, and I realized it because she took the time to sit on a little boy’s bed, to stay a little longer than she had to and to be the healing love of Christ.

“Don’t wait until graduation to decide what kind of nurse you want to be,” he continued. “Start as soon as you put on that white coat.”

The pediatric crash cart and accompanying medication guide are divided into color-coded segments based on a child’s weight. The guidelines are the first to support nurse decision-making to protect children from multiple needle sticks.

Kuensting has been an active member of the ENA for more than 25 years, most notably serving as the chair of the national committee for Advanced Practice from 2002-2004 during which the first Scope and Standards of Practice for the Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Emergency Department were written. Most recently she served on the organization’s national work group responsible for writing the Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse exam review manual.

Kuensting is also active in the St. Louis Association of Pediatric Nurses and Practitioners. She writes for numerous journals, is a speaker at national conferences and serves as an expert consultant for bio-technology and pharmaceutical companies.

In 2011, Kuensting joined the University of Missouri’s Sinclair School of Nursing as an assistant teaching professor and coordinator of the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner program. In 2013, she reduced her teaching hours to become director of the ENA’s Institute of Emergency Nursing Advanced Practice. As such, Kuensting is leading the effort to develop educational support and advocacy for advance practice nurses in emergency and urgent care settings.

“The ENA is a global organization, so the training and advocacy for advance practice providers established from the Institute has the potential of affecting care around the world, which is a tremendous responsibility but also very exciting,” she said.

NEXT GENERATION

As part of the DNP-capstone project, Kuensting submitted a resolution to the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) to develop evidence-based practice guidelines to limit the number of IV sticks children endure and to provide education to nurses on alternative therapies for fluid infusion. The guidelines are the first to support nurse decision-making to protect children from multiple needle sticks. Kuensting submitted a resolution to the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) to develop evidence-based practice guidelines to limit the number of IV sticks children endure and to provide education to nurses on alternative therapies for fluid infusion. The guidelines are the first to support nurse decision-making to protect children from multiple needle sticks. Kuensting has been an active member of the ENA for more than 25 years, most notably serving as the chair of the national committee for Advanced Practice from 2002-2004 during which the first Scope and Standards of Practice for the Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Emergency Department were written. Most recently she served on the organization’s national work group responsible for writing the Certified Pediatric Emergency Nurse exam review manual.

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Deanna Speight, D.N.P. (’14), worked as an ICU recovery room nurse, a travel nurse and a nurse in a cardiologist’s office conducting stress tests. She enjoyed her career but one thing was missing — autonomy. “Frankly, I don’t like being told what to do,” she said. “I like prescribing medications and ordering tests that I think are necessary without getting physician approval. I like building relationships with my patients, which means spending as much time with them as I feel I need. I also like being treated as an equal, and I didn’t always work for physicians who treated staff as equals.”

So in 2008, Speight put everything on the line, including her home, to gain her freedom. With the collateral, a small business loan and a leap of faith she opened Speight Family Medicine just outside of Memphis, Tennessee. Fortunately, Speight lives in a state that allows NPs to diagnose and treat without physician involvement.

“I went two or three days without seeing a single patient, which was scary. And, once we started getting patients there was a lag before we received reimbursement from the insurance companies, which was even scarier. I’d admit I was totally naive about the behind-the-scenes responsibilities. I had a lot of sleepless nights, that’s for sure.”

Sleepless nights but no regrets. Speight Family Medicine began thriving within a year of opening its doors. Speight now employs 10 staff, including three nurse practitioners who see more than 50 patients a day and earn salaries higher than the national average. In 2012, Speight opened a second private practice in Dickson, Tennessee, near Nashville.

“The risks totally have been worth it,” she said. “I like to lead rather than follow, and going off on my own has allowed me to do that in every way.”

SPEIGHT

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SLU’s Doctor of Nursing Practice program encourages its students to consider becoming their own bosses by starting businesses that will improve health care delivery. Here, three alumnae share their stories and offer advice for would-be entrepreneurs.

BEDSIDE TO BOARDROOM
Thinking beyond traditional practice is strongly encouraged in the School of Nursing’s Doctor of Nursing Practice program. Three years ago, the school added a module to the program’s curriculum, which is designed to instill entrepreneurship in its graduates and to prepare them for roles ranging from nurse executives, to nurse administrators, to independent business owners. “Nurses come to the table with so many valuable business skills to begin with,” said Rebecca A. Lorenz, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor. “They’re good listeners, good problem solvers and great communicators. All they need are the tools to turn those skills into innovation.”

At the core of the module are two courses taught by Lorenz, one of SLU’s Coleman Fellows — a faculty member charged with infusing entrepreneurship training into courses and academic programs. The
first course, “Health Care Delivery,” provides nurses with knowledge of the complex health care delivery system in the United States and other countries. The second course, “Leadership,” provides students with basic business principles, including organization, leadership and management skills as well as business and marketing plan development.

“We know that students who take these courses have a greater likelihood of establishing an independent practice or implementing change within an existing delivery system,” Lorenz said.

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Lorenz said passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010 provided the impetus for the curriculum change. The ACA brought millions of formerly uninsured Americans into a health care system that already was short on primary health care providers. Lorenz said the shortage created extraordinary opportunities for nurses, advanced practice nurses in particular, to lead in diverse settings, whether by establishing private practices in one of the states where nurse practitioners are able to provide medical care without oversight or management of a physician (entrepreneurship), or by assuming leadership roles within health care systems to improve care and outcomes. The latter is what Lorenz describes as an “entrepreneurship.”

“You don’t have to establish an independent practice to be an entrepreneur,” said Lorenz, who knows this firsthand. She implemented and directed a dental clinic for senior citizens in St. Charles, Missouri, while she was employed with SIMD Health before joining SLU. “There are so many other ways to affect change, address disparities and be innovative in health care, such as creating phone apps that remind patients to take their medications or check their sugar levels. The opportunities are endless.”

Lorenz also noted that the growing need for advanced practice nurses to fill the primary care gap prompted the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) to recommend that business practices education be woven into the Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice, the curriculum required for Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accredited programs.

FLYING SOLO

Pamela Assid, DNP (’14), is a nurse entrepreneur with extensive experience in critical care and emergency room nursing in military and civilian settings. Before retiring from the U.S. Air Force (USAF) in 2015, Assid was deputy commandant/chief nurse for the 302nd Aerospace Medicine Flight team at Buckley Air Force Base. She also was clinical manager of the emergency department at St. Francis Medical Center in Colorado Springs. Currently, she is director of the emergency department at Sky Ridge Ridge Medical Center in Lone Tree, Colorado, where she decreased arrival-to-room time by five minutes.

After her last deployment to the Middle East in 2003, Assid transitioned to the USAF Reserve and leveraged her valuable experience to establish with her mother — a nurse with considerable utilization management expertise — an independent legal nurse and forensic nursing consulting firm, IPR Medical Legal Consulting, LLC.

“Law firms retained me as a consultant on cases that involved less-than-ideal outcomes in emergency medicine to determine whether the standard level of care was met,” said Assid, who has a post-master’s certificate in forensic nursing.

“I enjoyed the work and, at the time, I was transitioning from active duty to reserve. I was trying to figure out my new life. I also had an infant daughter at home, and I thought that starting my own consulting firm would be a great alternative to shift work and working odd, crazy hours.”

Assid said her decision allowed her to spend valuable time with her daughter during her formative years. Even though she eventually returned to full-time work at a medical center, her firm continues to grow and prove profitable.

Her said her education at SLU helped that along by showing her how to relocate her business plan and improve her marketing techniques.

COMMUNITY COUNTS

For Sharon Page, MLN, ’06, DNP, ’19 choosing the entrepreneurial route has been about money and flexibility and more about providing patients with the kind of care she wants to offer. Page was a nurse practitioner in a pediatrician’s office in Martin, Tennessee, when she suggested they incorporate mental health services into the practice.

“There’s still very much a stigma to seeking mental health services, especially in a rural community,” Page said. “Providing counseling in a primary care clinic removes that concern. If you’re sitting in the waiting room, no one knows whether you’re there for a sore throat or to see the counselor.”

The pediatrician, however, wasn’t receptive to Page’s suggestion.

“I felt a little held back to be honest, and I wanted to do things a little differently, so I chose to start my own practice,” said Page, who is a board-certified pediatric mental health specialist with expertise in treating children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

In 2010, she established her own federally qualified rural health clinic — Martin Children’s Clinic — that has 10 employees plus a mental health counselor. They treat approximately 250 patients a week.

“You don’t have to establish an independent practice to be a professional,” said Page, who gives patients her personal cell phone number. “My professors at SLU were very helpful in supporting me and prodding me along to make my practice better than it can be.”

Lorenz and Page and Spight serve as examples to other students in the DNP program who are considering paths other than traditional practice.

“Entrepreneurship is high risk, but it also can be high profit, whether that profit means money or personal satisfaction,” she said.

As for the future, Lorenz said the demand for nurses who can assume leadership positions is becoming so great in today’s health care environment that colleges of nursing are considering not waiting until the doctoral level to offer business and leadership training.

“When you fail, don’t give up. Learn your lesson, quickly regroup and go again.” ASSID

PAGE

9

ADVICE

from School of Nursing alumni entrepreneurs to future entrepreneurs

IDENTIFY A NEED

“Ask advice, ask questions, shadow someone who does what you want to do.” ASSID

FIND A MENTOR

“My family was behind me 100 percent. Having that emotional support is almost as important as the financial support.” SPEIGHT

PLAY TO YOUR PASSION AND STRENGTHS

“Be prepared to work hard and lose sleep, at least initially.” PAGE

SEEK SUPPORT

“I don’t have to be all you. Share some of the responsibilities with those around you. I tried to go it alone but soon realized I can’t live without my office manager.” LORENZ

LEARN TO DELEGATE

“I feel a very strong sense of commitment to my community. And being able to go out on my own so that I can give them the care they deserve has been very important to me as a person and as a professional.” ASSID

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“If you fail, don’t give up. Learn your lesson, quickly regroup and go again.” ASSID

PREPARE FOR YOUR PASSION AND STRENGTHS

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Joan E. Dodgson, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N., F.A.A.N., has enjoyed her share of accolades. She was elected to the American Academy of Nursing and chairs the organization’s expert panel on breastfeeding. She was selected as the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Human Lactation, the premier global lactation research journal, and she is a March of Dimes Research Nurse of the Year nominee.

Dodgson said she is especially proud, however, of being chosen as the inaugural holder of the Patricia and James E. Hemak Endowed Professorship in Maternal Child Health at the Saint Louis University School of Nursing.

Dodgson joined the School of Nursing in January 2016 from Arizona State University, where she had been an associate professor for the past six years. She developed and directed the school’s Master of Public Health program and created academic and continuing education lactation courses for health care providers.

Dodgson is an internationally known expert on breastfeeding and a prolific NIH-funded researcher in the areas of breastfeeding across cultures and perinatal health disparities in vulnerable populations.

“Dr. Dodgson will strengthen the school’s research in maternal-child health, specifically in the area of lactation,” said Dean Teri Murray, (’79, ’93, ’07) Ph.D., A.P.H.N.-B.C., R.N., F.A.A.N. “She not only brings her exceptional research, but she also has a collaborative spirit and a passion that will inspire the next generation of nurses.”

In this article Dodgson shares her thoughts on her journey from clinical care to academia, her travels to Cambodia, her teaching philosophy and her love of birding.

PROFESSIONAL CHOICE

My mother and grandmother wanted to be nurses; they always encouraged me. The field appealed to me because it was a helping profession. I also appreciated that nursing offered a lot of possibilities for career development and specialization.

FROM CRITICAL CARE TO CAMBODIA

Initially I was intrigued by critical care. I liked the technology and having to learn so much about physiology and how it all worked. I was in critical care for about 10 years when I started to get a little burned out and needed a change. I then chose to work in labor and delivery, and post-partum care, which I really liked. At about the same time I made the switch, I had the opportunity to go to Thailand to provide care for Cambodian refugees, who had escaped Pol Pot’s regime. The refugees were housed in huge camps. They were incredibly ill and starving. The experience changed my life in a lot of ways. Because we didn’t have much to work with in the camps, I began to take a less techno-
logical perspective on care. To deliver health care, we learned to do a lot with the limited supplies at hand; it was community-based health care and that appealed to me – still does to this day.

CONTINUING TO CARE
I have an ongoing association and interest in Cambodia. Since my initial visit in 1979 I’ve returned many times to teach, conduct research, care for patients or just travel. Last year I served as the lactation consultant for the U.S. Embassy and did some teaching about the public health aspects of breastfeeding promotion for Cambodia’s National Institute of Public Health. Additionally, my son and his family live in Cambodia, where he does research and development for a non-governmental organization focused on removing landmines in the countryside. Only half of the landmines have been cleared since the Vietnam War.

THE FULL SPECTRUM
For years I worked in critical care because the focus was on life and death issues, but actually perinatal care is so much more com-

BREASTFEEDING ADVANCES
Over the past several years we’ve seen several advances in policies and programs designed to remove obstacles for women who want to breastfeed their babies. Public policy is shifting toward promoting breastfeeding as a primary prevention for chronic diseases. Breastfeeding prevents infants from developing diabetes when they get older, for example, and we have such a diabetes epidemic in this country. The federal government also has put a lot of energy into making policy changes. In 2011, the U.S. Surgeon General stressed the importance of lactation education and recommended all professionals who care for mothers and children be educated about breastfeeding. Within the last couple of years, the Centers for Disease Control has endorsed the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) as the health care specialist in lactation management.

LISTEN AND LEARN
My personal philosophy is that teachers facilitate learning. I don’t teach anyone anything. I facilitate opportunities for them to learn. I like being a part of another person’s growth. It’s very rewarding to see that happening. I also think teaching requires a lot of flexibility in order for you to meet the students’ needs and various learning styles.

PERFECT FIT
I was in Cambodia last year when I received the call about the opportunity at SLU. The position seemed perfect for me. It offered everything I enjoy – research, teaching, patient care. I also really like the social justice focus at SLU. That’s been a strong focus for my career — providing care to vulnerable populations. I also looked at the position just spoke to me.

FACILITATING SUCCESS
I’m not joining the school with any specific agenda or preconceived ideas about what I want to do. I plan to have lots of conversations with faculty members, students and others in the practice arena to see what they think.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE
I have a couple of friends in St. Louis but most of my family is in upstate New York. I’m looking forward to living in St. Louis because I’m a birder, and the city is on a major flyway—a path for migrating birds. I’m looking forward to observing the spring and fall migrations. I enjoy birding because it’s an outdoor activity requiring close observation, and birds are such interesting creatures. Additionally, birding attracts an interesting group of folks. I’m also a big movie buff, and I love to read mysteries and books on psychology and sociology. I’ve got the traveling bug, as well.

Patricia Melli Hemak, ’84, M.S.N, R.N., a member of the Future Nurses Club at Bishop Delhany High School in St. Louis, had a plan — earn a diploma in nursing and get a job in a hospital to pay off any debt. “No woman in my family had gone to college, and I was raised by a single mother,” she said. “If I wanted to go to college it would be on my own resources. So I didn’t set my sights beyond a three-year program.”

Hemak’s mentor in the nurses club had a different plan. She saw potential in Hemak and encouraged her to take the Saint Louis University School of Nursing scholarship exam. Hemak passed and earned a full scholarship to pursue a bachelor’s degree in the science of nursing. This degree eventually led to a master’s degree; a research career in maternal, neonatal and women’s health; and faculty positions at Saint Louis University, the University of Washington in Seattle, Regis University in Denver and St. Catherine University in Minnesota.

Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) as the health care specialist in lactation management. The mentor who saw that potential in Hemak is Mary Teresa Nioth, F.S.M., Ed.D., dean of the SLU nursing school from 1986 to 1982. “I wouldn’t be where I am had it not been for Sr. Teresa,” Hemak said. “Sr. Mary Caritas Ifrig, S.S.M., was another incredible influence on me as my maternity instructor. She was a visionary in the field of maternal neonatal care. She was among the first to see the value in child birth classes, and she advocated for allowing fathers in the delivery room in the 1960s. I’m just one of the many people Sr. Caritas touched.”

As a show of appreciation, Patricia Hemak and her husband, James, established the Patricia and James R. Hemak Endowed Professorship in Maternal Child Health. The inaugural holder, Joan E. Dodgson, Ph.D., was invested in the position in February.

“My husband and I were considering including the School of Nursing in our will, but a friend suggested we do it now so we can see the project to fruition and experience the joy it brings,” Hemak said. “I couldn’t be more thrilled that the inaugural holder is Professor Dodgson, who brings with her exceptional gifts and enthusiasm.”

This is the second time the Hemaks have shown their generosity toward the School of Nursing. James Hemak, who made his living working for the Junior Achievement organization and franchising Great Clips salons, surprised his wife a few years ago on her birthday with a gift, naming in her honor the school’s advanced maternal–child clinical suite in the school’s simulation laboratory. The gift came complete with state-of-the-art interactive and anatomically correct mother and newborn manikins.
SOLDIERING ON

As a med-surg and ICU nurse with the U.S. Air Force, CAPT. MICHELLE NEVEU dedicated four-and-a-half years of her life taking care of soldiers at Nellis Air Force Base (AFB) in Nevada and Lackland AFB in Texas. She continues to serve an Air Force reservist in Wichita, Kansas. But what she does with family members of those on base is equally important to her.

For the past three years, Neveu, a post-anesthesia care unit nurse at an outpatient surgery clinic in Wichita and student in the Master of Science in Nursing, Acute Care Nurse Practitioner program, has volunteered with the Key Spouse Program. The Air Force-wide initiative provides support services to family members whose spouses are deployed.

“We thank military members for their service, but we should remember that family members bear a lot of the burden,” said Neveu, who was deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 and whose husband is an Air Force pilot who has been deployed to multiple locations. “When you’re at home, you’re a single parent taking care of the kids, the dogs, the yard work, the bills. A little help goes a long way.”

Neveu helps spouses by contacting them on a regular basis to keep them connected to events on base and to assess any needs they might have. In addition to the Key Spouse Program, Neveu volunteers as a Service to School ambassador offering college application counseling to veterans who want to pursue degrees in nursing after active duty. In 2015, the Pat Tillman Foundation selected Neveu as a foundation scholar due to her “extraordinary academic and leadership potential,” and her “commitment to create positive change through her work in the field of medicine.”

When Neveu graduated from SLU next year, she hopes to work in an ICU, preferably within a Veterans Administration hospital.

“I really enjoy hearing the stories behind the veterans’ medical problems that they either don’t get a chance to tell or feel uncomfortable sharing,” she said. “My military background allows me to connect with them on a different level.”

HOPE FLOATS

Twenty-year-old ELIZABETH MOSAKOWSKI is close to her family. So when she moved from the Kansas City area to St. Louis in 2014 to attend nursing school, she understandably was “terribly” homesick.

She chose to overcome it by turning to what gave her a sense of belonging and purpose at home — service to her community. Within weeks of starting nursing school, Mosakowski joined SLU’s chapter of Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity.

“I received a scholarship to SLU in part because of the volunteer work I did back home,” Mosakowski said. “I’m so grateful for the gift, and I think the best way for me to repay SLU is to serve my community. It feels right.”

When she’s not studying for her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, Mosakowski is volunteering almost weekly, usually with an agency that provides services to children and adults with developmental challenges. She serves as a companion for clients of LittleBridge Partnership, an organization that encourages independence for people with disabilities. She helps with holiday parties and on field trips to bowling alleys or the City Museum.

Mosakowski’s work with people who have disabilities began in high school when volunteered as a buddy for her disabled classmates in physical education classes. She has taught swim lessons to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Down Syndrome in her hometown of Lee’s Summit, Missouri, for the past four years. She continues to provide lessons when she’s home during academic breaks.

“People with disabilities sometimes aren’t treated with enough respect or patience,” said Mosakowski, who chose to attend SLU because of its mission of educating men and women for others. “I want to give them the respect they deserve. I’ve always been able to connect with them and enjoy getting to know them. Even when it seems as though they’re on the quiet side, you can tell they have something to say. You just have to be patient enough to listen.”

In addition to her work with people with disabilities, Mosakowski has tutored at area schools, including the Youth Learning Center. She offers tours of SLU’s campus to students from Marion Middle School, a school in south city dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty by preparing young girls for college.

Mosakowski said she enjoys working with young people so much she is considering pursuing advanced degrees in nursing, which could lead to a career in academia.

Mosakowski also helps collect and package food for area pantries through Operation Food Search, and on many weekends she volunteers as support staff for 5K fundraising runs, including one close to her heart — the PurpleStride 5K for pancreatic cancer research. Mosakowski’s grandfather died from the disease.

Last year, Mosakowski was chosen to be a pledge parent for Alpha Phi Omega. Her responsibilities include encouraging other students to join and volunteer.

“We’re all busy, and you can find a million excuses for not having time to volunteer, but there are even more reasons to get involved,” she said. "WHETHER IT’S A ONE-TIME PROJECT, A WEEKLY OCCURRENCE OR A LIFETIME COMMITMENT TO SERVICE, School of Nursing students are giving back to the community. For some students, volunteering in the community is a tangible expression of their faith. For others, volunteering satisfies their passion to provide care to those most in need. Here, we meet a few of the students who are donating their limited free time to help others."
At the suggestion of her father, Edwards began volunteering at Camp Quality in St. Clair, Missouri, a decade ago when she was an undergraduate at SLU. She began as a camper’s companion. Once she earned her nursing degree, the camp asked her to serve as camp nurse, which she’s done for one week every June for the past five years.

"It can be a little nerve-wracking," she said. "We have 30 campers on a ton of medications. I pass medication four times a day and administer chemotherapy, but I also take care of little scrapes and boo boos, too, which, at times, is just as important."

Edwards said it is one thing to give money to support a cause, such as Camp Quality. "It’s another to give your time." "It’s good to see firsthand the difference you can make in someone’s life," said Edwards, a student in the Master of Science in Nursing – Nurse Practitioner program. "If you give money it’s easy to forget what it went for, but I never lose sight of why I’m here."

"I’m passionate about helping those who can’t afford to eat well," said Gucciardo. "Proper nutrition is important to improve quality of life, and I’m passionate about helping those who can’t afford to eat well."

After years of helping on an individual basis, Gucciardo decided last year that he wanted to do more. His friends told him about Food Outreach, an organization that prepares meals for men, women and children living with cancer, HIV and AIDS in the St. Louis metro area. Gucciardo volunteers on Saturday mornings packaging home-cooked meals that are delivered throughout the week.

"Sometimes clients will come in on Saturdays to pick up their food, and you see firsthand how they’re maintaining and even improving their physical health," he said. "It’s gratifying to know that a little bit of my time can make a difference."

Gucciardo has been in nursing for nearly 25 years. His background is in trauma care. The 48-year-old former helicopter nurse has been working in quality improvement at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital for the past seven years. After he graduates in December 2016 as an adult/gerontological primary care nurse practitioner, he plans to work in a primary care setting that offers care to underserved populations.

"When I look at the big picture, I see there are needs far greater than my own," he said. "There are always opportunities to give back, and that will be a permanent part of my life."
Pierre's stories can be found on her blog: http://afoolishminds.wordpress.com. Here is an excerpt:

"Today is 10 days in the Land of a Thousand Hills, a.k.a. Rwanda. A beautiful land is an understatement. Part of Rwanda's beauty is the cleanliness of its capital city, Kigali. Plastic bags are banned there. The city has won many awards for its cleanliness and environmental restrictions."

The Saint Louis University School of Nursing Executive Advisory Board is composed of alumni and friends. Members support Dean Teri Murray with the school’s planning and development activities. The board serves as stakeholders to further the School of Nursing’s mission, scope, goals and programs. Members also help facilitate communication with the public and other community stakeholders, shape the school’s administration’s agenda, make periodic reviews of its activities and expand the School of Nursing’s circle of friends and supporters.

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Pierre has been living in Kigali since August 2015. She teaches nursing students how to conduct physical assessments and develop care plans. She trains staff nurses in IV placement and mechanical ventilation.

"While the nurses and students may know what to do, they don’t always know why they are doing what they are doing," she said. "They do as they are told and don’t understand the importance of their role. I also notice that nurses won’t explain to patients what they’re doing or ask a patient’s permission before providing care. I teach them the importance of communicating with their patients." Pierre credits her SLU education for fueling her interest in caring for people with varied cultural backgrounds.

"I didn’t realize until after graduation how much I benefited from the valuable experiences my professors had with all types of patients. Their experiences and stories were so rich. Now I have my own stories to tell."
She is our future. We are her present.

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