

THE PULSE

SPRING 2015

Nursing Students Serve Their Communities, State

Nursing students at Auburn and Auburn Montgomery are serving some of the most underserved populations in Alabama: school-aged children.



AUM

A community-academic partnership between neighboring county school systems and AUM's School of Nursing has resulted in AUM students helping public school nurses identify children at risk for health issues.

Assistant Professor Ginny

Langham and Associate Professor Allison Terry have targeted school-aged children in Alabama's Black Belt region – Lowndes, Montgomery, and Elmore counties – for a Healthy Kids program.

Not only is the region one of the poorest in the country, but there is a particularly high incidence of diabetes among its residents. With a decrease in state funding causing some school systems to lay off school nurses, those left are struggling to treat a greater number of students who have a wider variety of health issues than ever before.

“These screenings allow health problems in all school-aged children to be detected early so that they can be treated,” said Terry.

“In Alabama, almost one person in every 10 is known to be diagnosed with diabetes, thus leading to the state being ranked fourth in the nation for prevalence of the disease,” added Langham.

Besides blood glucose, the Healthy Kids program tests blood pressure, vision, hearing, scoliosis, and BMI. Of the more than 700 Elmore County students screened by AUM in spring 2014, nearly 31 percent had significant health issues worthy of a referral.

AUM was unable to complete diabetes testing for at least 193 children in the region after the program ran out of materials.

“This group of children could experience life-threatening complications as a result of the disease being undetected,” said Langham.

Terry and Langham are consistently seeking funding to maintain adequate supplies and potentially increase the number of participating schools each year.

Jackson Hospital in Montgomery recently agreed to provide supplies for screenings in Lowndes County. Blood sugar lancets and glucose strips are particularly costly and require frequent replenishing.

“It is our intent to save as many children as possible from the debilitating effects of acute and chronic illnesses,” Langham said.

Auburn

Each fall, Auburn nursing students provide free, comprehensive health screenings to all students in six Macon

County schools –

approximately 2,000 students in pre-kindergarten through high school. The TigerCheck program (formerly called KidCheck) includes vision, dental, and scoliosis testing; assessment of vital signs including heart and lung sounds; and height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) measurements.

The use of technology allows nursing students to generate electronic, individualized reports for parents, as well as a comprehensive file of all results for the school nurse.

A continued partnership with Tuskegee University's Department of Nursing gives students in Tuskegee's pediatrics class the opportunity to work with Auburn students and administer the screenings in Macon schools.

Also in the fall, Auburn students work with the staff of HNH Immunizations to provide the flu mist vaccine to participating school systems in a 50-mile radius. In the spring, Auburn students administer the TigerCheck testing to all children in the Bullock County school system.

“Most of the kids we see do not go to the doctor for a basic preventive health check because of limited access to health care or lack of health insurance covering preventive services,” said Auburn Professor Constance Hendricks.

Auburn nursing students are probably most noticeable working alongside East Alabama Medical Center's Emergency Medical Services staff in Jordan-Hare Stadium for all home football games.

But Hendricks noted that Auburn's outreach opportunities are constantly expanding to better prepare students and to serve health needs throughout the state. Recently, the school's mobile Health Promotion Clinics added sites in low-health resource areas. Last semester, Auburn students provided screenings for cholesterol, glucose, hemoglobin, height, weight, BMI, and health counseling to more than 400 people in Lee, Bullock, Chambers, Macon, and Tallapoosa counties.



Faculty News and Accomplishments



Tanya Johnson, an assistant clinical professor at Auburn, earned a grant from the Daniel F. Breeden Endowment. The grant program, managed by the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Auburn, supports teaching and learning projects that directly benefit the instructor, students, and the university's overall teaching program.



Jennifer Groff, MSN, RN, recently joined the Auburn Montgomery faculty as an associate clinical professor. She earned a BSN from Worcester State University in Worcester, Mass. ('95), and an MSN from the Uniformed School University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md. ('07). Groff was previously employed as a nurse practitioner.



Constance Hendricks, a professor at Auburn, was recognized by the Auburn University Women's Resource Center with the 2014 Women of Distinction Faculty Leadership Award. The Women of Distinction Awards are annually presented to an undergraduate student, graduate student, faculty, staff, and alumna who demonstrate exemplary leadership abilities.



Melanie Higgins, MEd, RN, recently joined the Auburn Montgomery faculty as an assistant clinical professor after serving as director of Gentiva Home Health in Montgomery. She earned a BSN from UAB ('83) and a master's from AUM ('89). Higgins previously taught at Troy, AUM, and Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School.



Margot Fox, MSN, RN, recently joined the Auburn Montgomery faculty as an assistant clinical professor. She not only earned her BSN from Auburn ('86), but completed the joint Auburn/Auburn Montgomery MSN program ('13). Fox began her nursing career in North Carolina, but returned to her native Alexander City, Ala., to work as an occupational health nurse for the textile industry.



Ellen Justice, MSN, RN, ONC, recently joined the Auburn Montgomery faculty as an assistant clinical professor after working at Jackson Hospital and Clinic in Montgomery. She earned an ASN from Troy Montgomery ('79), a BSN from University of South Carolina ('96), and an MSN from University of Phoenix ('06). Justice has 34 years of experience as a staff nurse, manager, or educator.



"Mom and Jim just wanted to give students who needed assistance the opportunity to pursue nursing as a career," said Julie Martinez, Liz's oldest daughter.

Named Scholarship Allows Late Alumna to Support Future Nurses

Jim and Liz Marion never wanted any attention for establishing an endowed scholarship in the Auburn School of Nursing. In fact, Jim said his late wife was somewhat reluctant to the idea of the scholarship even bearing her name.

"She never wanted any publicity in her name, just a scholarship to help needy students," he said.

The Elizabeth Marion Memorial Endowed Scholarship is awarded to incoming freshman in pre-nursing or nursing, especially those who demonstrate financial need. Jim and many friends initially funded the scholarship.

"Mom and Jim just wanted to give students who needed assistance the opportunity to pursue nursing as a career," said Julie Martinez, Liz's oldest daughter.

Liz married in her late teens and had two daughters. She worked to help support her family and wanted her children to finish college before she even started. It wasn't until after that marriage ended in 1977 that she pursued her own education, finishing an associate's degree in business in the early 1980s.

Liz then met and married Jim Marion. Both worked at the University of Florida – Jim in agriculture and Liz in the medical school and UF Health Shands Hospital.

Between her experiences at UF and watching Julie pursue both a BSN and MSN, Liz's interest in medicine intensified.

After a short stint at North Carolina State University, Liz and Jim moved to Auburn, where Jim became dean of Auburn's College of Agriculture. With the encouragement of her close friend, Edith Kitchens, dean of the School of Nursing, Liz applied and was accepted into the nursing program.

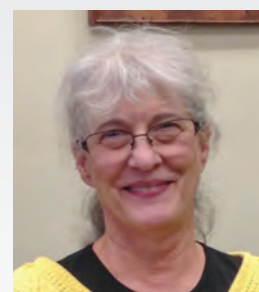
When Liz graduated in 1993, she received the Dean's Award for qualities that exemplify professional nursing. Her classmates voted to recognize the 55-year-old with the Most Supportive Student Award.

Liz's career as a nurse was at East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika, Ala. She died in 2012 at the age of 74 after a three-year battle with cancer.

Why I Give



Roby Simmons, '82
Alumna, Friend of Auburn
"It is with pleasure that I give back to the Auburn School of Nursing, which provided me with the best instructors, best clinical experiences, and knowledge to ensure my success as a nurse. It is also important that this legacy continues at a university, who like many, share the same values: I believe in work, hard work. I believe in Auburn and love it."



Barbara Hightower
Dean, AUM Library
"In the decade I have been the library's liaison to the School of Nursing, my respect and admiration for the faculty have grown. They are dedicated to teaching students to be knowledgeable, competent, and caring professionals who will excel in their profession. It's been rewarding for me to assist students with their research. When I retire in April, one of the things I will miss most is working with the nursing faculty and students."

AUM Faculty Inspires Couple to Establish Fund

Arthur and Maureen Britton did not receive their educations at Auburn Montgomery, and yet the couple is devoted to supporting its School of Nursing.

Arthur, a retired physician, and Maureen, a retired nurse, became acquainted with the nursing school through Arthur's mother, Margaret, who served on the school's advisory board. Mrs. Britton was not in the medical field, but her husband was a pediatrician. She was also dear friends with Irma Moore, who not only served on the advisory board that created Auburn Montgomery, but also on nursing's advisory board. For Moore's dedication and service to its School of Nursing, the nursing building is named in her honor.

Maureen said she first met Professor and Associate Dean Ramona Lazenby when the Brittons began their respective medical careers at Baptist Medical Center South more than 30 years ago.

When Mrs. Britton stepped down from the nursing advisory board more than a decade ago, Maureen accepted her seat. It was a way for the recently retired nurse to stay involved in the profession.

"The dedication and professionalism of the faculty is evident by the accomplishments of the students and the School of Nursing," said Maureen. "We feel it has played a vital role in our community in

educating nurses now and for the future."

Maureen's position on the advisory board also reacquainted her with Lazenby.

"Over the years, I have been impressed by Dr. Lazenby's commitment to the students and the School of Nursing," said Maureen. "We felt establishing this endowment fund would be an ideal way to honor her dedication to the profession."

The Ramona Lazenby Fund for Excellence at Auburn Montgomery exists to provide faculty with funds to support summer research, professional development, travel expenses, research assistants, specialized research publications, materials and/or equipment, or other needs as determined by the dean.

Lazenby began teaching at AUM in 1984 and joined the faculty full time in 1989. She estimates she has taught approximately 3,000 nurses in her career, four of whom are currently colleagues at AUM.





14th Annual Blue Jean Ball

The Auburn and Auburn Montgomery Schools of Nursing discovered renewed success in 2014 when the 14th Annual Blue Jean Ball returned to Coach Pat Dye's Crooked Oaks Hunting Lodge on Sept. 26. The event featured Conecuh Sausage; live music; dancing; visits from Auburn's mascot, Aubie, and AUM's mascot, Curtiss; photo ops with birds of prey from the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine's Southeastern Raptor Center; live and silent auctions; tours of Dye's home; and dinner. Since its inception in 2001, the Blue Jean Ball has attracted hundreds of friends, faculty, and students each year and benefits students, faculty, and programming initiatives in the Schools of Nursing.



Alumni Updates

Betsy Bean, Auburn '81, is currently working as an executive sales specialist with Shire Pharmaceuticals. She is also grandmother to four.

Sarah C. Myers, Auburn '83, is the director of the Licensed Practical Nursing program at CHOICE High School and Technical Center in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

Tracey H. Black, Auburn '89, currently works at Arboretum Pediatrics in Charlotte, N.C.

Anginette H. Browder, AUM '97, has held positions in Arizona, Arkansas, Germany, Georgia, Missouri, D.C., and Virginia, working in various areas including rehab health, med/surg,

outpatient chemotherapy infusion and preventative medicine. She served as a critical-care nurse officer with the U.S. Army Reserves for four years and earned an MBA from Webster University and an MSN from Georgia State. Browder is board-certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program. Currently, she is a nurse practitioner with Inova Health Systems in Falls Church, Va. She was the featured speaker at AUM's Alumni and Senior Tea in the fall.

Betsy S. Miniclier, Auburn '99, currently works at Huntsville Hospital in Huntsville, Ala.

Misty H. Thrasher, Auburn '99, earned an NP in women's health from Vanderbilt University

and spent 10 years working at Women's Clinic Shoals in Sheffield, Ala., as a certified registered nurse practitioner.

Gretchen Haynes, Auburn '03, is a transplant coordinator for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama in Birmingham, Ala.

Catherine W. Hundley, Auburn '07, is currently working as a clinical educator at Springhill Medical Center in Mobile, Ala. She had been a staff nurse and then a charge nurse on the cardiac step-down unit at Southeast Alabama Medical Center in Dothan, Ala.

Sarah Wagner, Auburn '08, completed a family nurse practitioner degree at Vanderbilt University in August 2012; moved with her U.S. Army

husband to Fairbanks, Alaska, in September 2012; has been working as a provider at Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center since November 2012.

Jamie Gamber, Auburn '09, is currently living in the Pensacola, Fla., area and working as a PACU Nurse for Cornerstone Surgicare.

Megan W. Wallace, Auburn '10, got married on Dec. 6, 2014, and is working at the Children's Medical Center of Dallas in inpatient gastroenterology.

Kelsey Hausfeld, Auburn '13, is a floor nurse at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Ivy T. Prothro, Auburn '13, is an NICU nurse at Baptist Medical Center South in Montgomery, Ala.

Auburn Alumnus Pursues Nursing for the Options

It never mattered to Jake Ray that he chose a career dominated by women.

In fact, the Auburn native opted to study nursing at Auburn University simply because of "the options it gave me."

"There are so many things I could do with a nursing degree – CRNA, CRNP, travel nurse, to name a few," Ray said. "If I didn't like a particular field, I could always try something else. It's always good to have options and the ability to move anywhere and find a job."

According to the most recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, 9.6 percent of all registered nurses in the U.S. are male. The 2011 data shows the percentage of male nurses has tripled since 1970.

"I didn't really think about it that much. Nursing was what I wanted to do, so I went for

it," added Ray. "Sure, you'll have the people who bring up the fact that you're in a traditionally female major, but it never fazed me."

"I feel like today's nursing is moving out of the old connotation of the word. For example, the unit that I work on now is half male, if not more."

The field of nursing may have originally emerged as a military or religious role, often filled by men, but during the Civil War, when men were engaged in other pursuits, women stepped into the roles. By the 1900s, nursing schools were admitting only women. The Army and Navy Nurse Corps were limited to women until after the Korean War.

Ray, who received his BSN in May 2014, is currently working in the cardiovascular intensive care unit at Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham, Ala.



"There are so many things I could do with a nursing degree – CRNA, CRNP, travel nurse, to name a few," Ray said.

His goal is to eventually become a certified registered nurse anesthetist.

BSN from AUM Fulfilled Sasser's Dreams

Joan Sasser always had an interest in medicine and even considered a career as a veterinarian.

Family circumstances may have prevented the Mobile, Ala., native from attending a four-year college right after high school, but it didn't deter her from pursuing her interests.

She opted to study nursing at the Mobile Infirmary, where instruction was more affordable.

"I will say, I have never regretted my decision," she said.

Sasser earned a nursing diploma in 1969, but she wasn't satisfied.

"It was always a dream of mine to get a BSN," she said. "With my husband's job, we traveled around the country, and whenever I had a chance, I would take some courses at the local college. When we wound up in Luverne, Ala., about 45 miles south of Montgomery, I realized that I had completed all of my pre-requisites for nursing."

She also realized that if she wanted to fulfill that dream, she had a little over a year before their youngest child would start college. Sasser found the RN to BSN program at Auburn Montgomery and graduated in 1997.

"What I remember the most about AUM were the instructors," she recalled. "They all were so genuinely interested in us and our learning experience. They were an inspiration."

Sasser is currently working at Thomas Hospital in Fairhope, Ala., as a charge nurse in the emergency department. Thomas and the Mobile Infirmary, where Sasser's career path began, are two of three acute-care hospitals in the Infirmary Health system throughout Alabama.

"I've had the opportunity to be involved in many areas of nursing, but the emergency department is my favorite. No two days or two patients are the same. We care for every age, under every imaginable set of circumstances," said Sasser.



"What I remember the most about AUM were the instructors," she recalled. "They all were so genuinely interested in us and our learning experience. They were an inspiration."

"I can truthfully say there have been very few things I have done in nursing that I did not enjoy. I have been a nurse for 45 and a half years, and I will wake up tomorrow morning and go to work with a smile."

Student News



Auburn's Student Nursing Association held an event in the fall to raise money for Open Hands Overflowing Hearts, an organization started by an Auburn student (diagnosed with neuroblastoma) to raise money for pediatric oncology research.

Junior nursing students at Auburn participate in the employee tuberculin skin testing program at East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika, Ala., administering hundreds of skin tests to employees each summer.



Auburn Montgomery's Association of Nursing Students held an event in the fall to benefit Brantwood Children's Home in Montgomery. "Tape a Teacher" allowed AUM students to purchase tape to secure faculty members to a door. Brantwood has been providing a safe, stable, and structured environment for abused, neglected, and other at-risk children since 1917.



Medal of Honor recipient Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie G. Adkins presented Auburn senior nursing student Maria May with the Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Achievement during Auburn's Military Appreciation Day game against Texas A&M. The cross is awarded to outstanding Army cadets who exemplified excellence in physical fitness, academics, and leadership.



Crow Found More Than Nursing School at Auburn

Kinsey Crow is a resident assistant, student worker, secretary of the International Student Organization, and a teacher for English as a Second Language classes. She's also a senior in Auburn's School of Nursing.

Crow came to the Plains from Mount Vernon, Ohio, after earning a scholarship through the Distinguished Young Women of Ohio program. She and her parents visited several colleges in Alabama, but they all fell in love with Auburn.

"It felt magical when we toured the campus," said Crow. "I was not only struck by the beauty of the school, but the friendliness of every person we met. My parents felt comfortable with me attending here, even if it is over 700 miles from home."

Crow's strong interest in human anatomy and the healing process could have led her to medical school, but she wanted to study nursing and focus on direct patient care.

"Health and the human body fascinate me, and I enjoy the practical nature of the nursing profession," she said. "I felt that nursing married several of my passions."

Serving as a resident assistant at Auburn has provided Crow with the

chance to influence students new to college. She said she is confident these skills will carry over as a nurse.

Crow's friendship with a number of international students led her to realize a need for all international students to be well integrated into the university community. So, she joined the International Student Organization.

"I see it as an opportunity to connect American students and international students, allowing all cultures to understand each other," she explained. "I believe cultural awareness is significant in providing competent and excellent nursing care."

Crow also finds the time to teach ESL at Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn and to work in Auburn's Office of Development.

"It definitely takes time management to balance everything," she said. "Sometimes, I prioritize my time based on what is meaningful and impactful, even if it means sacrificing sleep or study time. I think relationships with people are very valuable, and behind each activity I participate in are real friendships that are mutually helpful and bring such joy."



"Health and the human body fascinate me, and I enjoy the practical nature of the nursing profession," she said. "I felt that nursing married several of my passions."



Greetings to Everyone,

This is my final message as dean of both the Auburn and AUM Schools of Nursing. When you read this newsletter, I will be the full-time dean at the Auburn School of Nursing. Allow me to share some background on this transition.

In late October, the provost and vice president of academic affairs at

Auburn University wrote to the president, providing rationale and recommending that Auburn University appoint a full-time dean for the School of Nursing at the earliest possible date. The president approved this recommendation, and I was offered this exciting opportunity.

Both schools have reached a point when the attention and efforts of a part-time dean are not enough to take them to the next level. As AUM transitions to a College of Nursing and Health Sciences, they too will be searching for a full-time dean.

For me, this is a time of mixed emotion. My time at Auburn Montgomery has been a blessing in many ways. I have had the opportunity to work with gifted and dedicated people, to see a variety of administrative approaches, and to witness great change in some areas, steady progress in others. I am delighted the administration has appointed Dr. Ramona Lazenby as interim dean of the AUM College of Nursing and Health Sciences to provide stable and consistent leadership as the national search is carried out in 2015.

It has been my honor to serve as dean of Auburn Montgomery's School of Nursing. While the leadership for both schools will change, the need for your support will not.

Please know that your support of the students, faculty, and programs over the past five years has been deeply appreciated. Going forward, your support of me at Auburn, Dr. Lazenby as interim dean, and soon, the new dean selected for Auburn Montgomery, will be needed to continue the good work both accomplished and under way in the schools. Our futures are bright because of the support we get from you. I hope you'll continue to help us prepare the best nurses in the region.

Again, my heartfelt thanks.
All the very best,

Gregg E. Newschwander
Barbara S. Witt Professor and Dean

Note: The development officer for Auburn nursing is Shelley Grider: (334) 844-6753 or gridesw@auburn.edu. The development officer for Auburn Montgomery nursing is Martie McEnerney: (334) 244-3433 or mmcenern@aum.edu.

AUM Helps Non-traditional Student with BSN

Christina Huff may be a non-traditional student, but she became interested in nursing in a rather traditional way.

As a young adult, Huff recalled witnessing the care a hospice nurse provided her grandmother.

"The compassion and sincerity she displayed had a profound impact on me and showed another facet of nursing I was not aware of at the time," she said. "Since then, it has been my desire to emulate that kind of care. Nursing provides me with that opportunity while being of service to others."

Huff was raised in Kekaha, what she calls a tiny town on the island of Kaua'i, Hawaii. She moved to Alabama at the age

of 16 and currently resides in Clanton with her husband, Andy, and their four children.

With a goal of earning a BSN, Huff found her way to Auburn Montgomery through friends, family, and a little studying.

"I did some research on the NCLEX pass rates and accreditation of several universities within a one-hour drive from my home," she said. "After touring Auburn Montgomery and speaking with a few of the faculty members, I knew this was where I wanted to be."

Huff is currently a member of the National Student Nursing Association and the Auburn University Montgomery Association of Nursing Students (AUMANS).



"After touring Auburn Montgomery and speaking with a few of the faculty members, I knew this was where I wanted to be."

"AUMANS provides excellent opportunities to give back to those less fortunate in our community," she said.

After graduating in May, Huff plans to start working in a hospital "to obtain the necessary experience needed to further my education." Her next goal is to become a family nurse practitioner.

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Save the Date!

- APRIL 13** Auburn Golf Outing
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for more information.
- APRIL 18** A-Day Tailgate at Miller Hall
- MAY 12** AUM Spring Tea at the Library Tower

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