

Education

St. Kate's students meeting the need for more nurses

Collaboration with Augustana Care gives undergrads clinical experience in geriatric health

By LESLIE WALTERS

Sixteen nursing students from St. Catherine University made the rounds in mid-December at the Augustana Care senior housing complex in South Minneapolis, bidding farewell to the dozens of residents ages 55-102 they cared for during the fall semester.

The young women had taken part in a new collaboration between St. Catherine and Augustana Care that gives students hands-on experience in nursing and encourages them to consider geriatric nursing as a specialty.

The university interns participated in weekly clinics for the seniors on better health and the prevention of disease and injury. They screened residents for high blood pressure, poor nutrition and depression, showed them how to prevent falls and assisted staff in conducting regular foot care clinics.

St. Catherine will be sending 16 more nursing students to Augustana Care in the spring semester. The undergraduates all completed a class in gerontology and participated in a service learning project in preparation for the clinical study in community health, according to St. Catherine professor Kathleen Dudley.

"When looking for a clinic last spring that would provide students with experience working with older adults, we found Augustana Care particularly desirable," said Dudley. "Augustana provides independent living, some assisted living and high-level intensive assisted living."

The collaboration benefits the elderly residents and professional nursing staff at Augustana as well, according to Denise Wolff, the director of health services there and a graduate of St. Catherine. "We

wanted to get St. Kate's involved," Wolff said. "St. Kate's has a cutting-edge reputation, and it's great that these classes exist early on in the (nursing) curriculum."

The students learn various strategies that seniors can use to maintain their health and delay the onset of chronic illnesses, according to Dudley. They also help lead discussions on such topics as memory enhancement, recognizing the symptoms of a stroke and choosing healthy snacks.

"Depression is a common problem in older adults as they experience more loss in their lives," Dudley said. "Falls resulting in hip fractures are a leading cause of disability and can result in a loss of independence. Depending on screening results, the students provide teaching as well as followup with the residents under the guidance of staff nurses."

The nursing students shadow Augustana Care's registered nurses, learning health assessment skills and assisting the nurses as they treat the elderly residents. "The residents help the students by sharing their life stories and concerns, and the students learn about the challenges and opportunities of aging," Dudley said. They also learn how to establish a therapeutic relationship and address the unique physical, social and spiritual needs of older people, according to Dudley. "They learn how to be present, to actively listen and to support the residents," she said.

Laura Devinny, 22, a senior at St. Catherine, worked closely this fall with two seniors at Augustana Care, one with dementia, impaired mobility and advanced Parkinson's disease, and another with bipolar disorder. "Working with older adult patients was a good opportunity to gain new medical knowledge,"



St. Catherine University nursing student Fardowsa Kassim (above) checked resident Alice Norman's blood pressure at Augustana Care in South Minneapolis, where fellow resident Lemuel Pryor discussed his health with St. Kate's nursing student Asha Sathre (right). PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

she said. "I was nervous going in, especially with mental health and memory loss issues."

Nicole Palmer, 22, a junior at St. Catherine, worked with a centenarian who had vision, balance and mobility problems. She learned about sleeping issues among the elderly, and educated herself and her patient about various medications and their potential side effects. "I learned that taking a holistic approach to the person makes for good care," Palmer said, and she gently encouraged her patients to incorporate spirituality into their health routines.

"It's exciting to expose students to all aspects of geriatric care and how wonderful it is," Wolff said. "The insight that comes through intergenerational mentoring profoundly impacts the residents as well as the students."

NURSING STUDENTS ►17



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16◀ BOTANICAL ART

who say the basis of botanical art is to be so precise that anyone seeing it can identify the plants. That exactness is what drew Garber to the art form. She grew up on a 350-acre corn and soybean farm with an unplowed area she referred to as her "playground" where she would go to draw such plants as pale lavender and prairie rose.

An aunt who lived in Washington, D.C., periodically sent her clippings of reviews of art shows and other art-related news. The aunt continued that practice for 52 years, encouraging Garber to continue her artistic pursuits.

When the 64-year-old Garber attended art school decades ago, she said she discovered representational art "wasn't respected" and most instruction failed to deal with the mechanics and processes of drawing and painting. In the 1980s, she gravitated to Atelier Lack, a highly respected Minneapolis art school.

Attending classes for eight years at night while working during the day, Garber learned all about realistic artwork. Even though Atelier Lack did not focus on botanical art, she developed her skills by painting still lifes and other images.

As Garber honed her talent, she met a



School founder Marilyn Garber leads a class, with her painting of a wild geranium shown at left. GARBER PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

small but devoted band of fellow botanical artists and figured she could create a school to give them a chance to teach like-minded souls. When it opened, the Minnesota School of Botanical Art was only the fourth of its kind in the country. Classes were held at the Bakken Museum in Minneapolis until two years ago when the school moved to the Longfellow House.

Garber has also kept busy promoting botanical art. She served as president of the 1,700-member American Society of Botanical Artists and has exhibited her work from Europe to Asia. With the help of other botanical artists, she has drawn many of the plants from New Guinea that were collected by University of Minnesota professor George Weiblen, and she is currently overseeing a project to document the 400 species found in the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden in Minneapolis.

"When I started out, this art form was dying and the work of artists in the field wasn't all that good," Garber said. "But in the last 20 years the work of American botanical artists has stood up to any in world."



St. Catherine University nursing student Nicole Blanchette checks resident Kermit Piltengesrud's blood pressure at Augustana Care in South Minneapolis. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

15◀ NURSING STUDENTS

There is a shortage of registered nurses in the U.S., according to Jenna Zark, communications director for Augustana Care. That shortage is especially troubling as the postwar baby boom generation ages.

In 2030, baby boomers will be 65 to 85 years old, accounting for a large percentage of the U.S. population, according to Linda Shell, executive director of leadership and educational development for Volunteers of America. Many nurses coming out of college are not interested in geriatric care, preferring to work

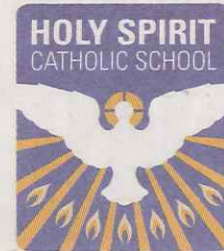
in acute care in hospitals, she said. However, she added, 91 percent of nursing graduates still start out working with the elderly in long-term care.

"We need intense clinical education for skilled geriatric nursing," Shell said. "We're not in crisis yet, but we need to address the issue."

"Obviously, aging is a big issue facing health care," Wolff said. "It's difficult to recruit, but (long-term care) is where the jobs are. Augustana Care is responding to the challenge of a big increase in skilled geriatric nursing through our efforts with St. Kate's."

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