



# The Pulse

Department of Nursing, Summer 2007

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

## 25 years of JMU nursing

ON OCT. 14, the James Madison University Department of Nursing celebrated its 25th anniversary with an open house in the Health and Human Services Building and an evening gala.

The afternoon open house included tours of the assessment lab, the skills lab and the new simulation lab. More than 75 alumni greeted classmates, reminisced over class pictures and albums, and toured the department. Four alumni, now JMU nursing faculty members, shared the fun. Over punch and anniversary cake, alumni shared student memories and life accomplishments. Many alumni did not end their education at JMU but have pursued advanced degrees to become nurse educators, nurse practitioners, midwives and a nurse anesthetist.

The evening festivities began with a cocktail hour and progressed



At the 25th anniversary celebration gala, nursing department's first graduates from the Class of 1982 join original program head Dr. Marcia Dake (center).

to dinner and a program. After a short update from Dr. Merle Mast, department head, Dr. Marcia Dake, the first program head, recalled memories of beginning the program in 1980 and of the first pinning ceremony in 1982, complete with caps and white uniforms. Music and dancing concluded a memorable evening of renewed acquaintances and shared stories.



Dr. Dake provides entertaining memories at the gala.

## Baccalaureate Nursing Program will double numbers

JMU IS RESPONDING TO the nursing shortage by expanding its undergraduate program from 100 juniors and seniors in 2002 to 240 in 2007-08. A 2003 report by the State Council of Higher Education concluded that Virginia schools will need to double their average number of new nurses per year in order to meet future demands for new registered nurse positions and to replace retiring nurses.

"Although it is requiring a lot of planning and hard work, we are committed to admitting as many

students as possible," said Dr. Melody Eaton, Bachelor of Science in Nursing program coordinator. "Thanks to attention from the media about the shortage, many JMU students are interested in the nursing major, and we have been able to admit only about two-thirds of the students who complete the prerequisite courses and are qualified to enter." Students seeking to enter nursing have faced the uncertainty and frustration of competitive admission to the program.

The JMU administration has worked closely with the department to secure faculty positions and teaching space needed for growth. "Program expansion requires additional faculty members, offices, classroom and lab spaces, and clinical placements," noted Dr. Merle Mast, department head. "The agencies in this area who provide clinical sites have worked closely with all the schools in our region to schedule practicum experiences, so we can prepare more nurses."

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## Graduate program welcomes new coordinator

DR. PATTY HALE joined the nursing faculty in August as the new graduate program coordinator. Hale comes to JMU from Lynchburg College with a wealth of experience in teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and numerous awards for her scholarship and teaching excellence. Her scholarly activities have focused on health promotion, community health and infectious diseases.

Now in its third year, the graduate program, offering tracks to prepare adult and geriatric nurse practitioners and nurse educators, has a record number of applicants. Designed to meet the growing demand for primary care and the shortage of nursing faculty members, the program's graduates are in high demand. Currently 20 students are enrolled in the program, which is partially online. This year Hale has made it a priority to inform interested nurses about the new program, and the number of applicants is rising. She and other faculty members are working to transition the nurse educator post-master's program to an online format for working adult learners.

Would you like graduate program information? Contact Dr. Patty Hale at [halepj@jmu.edu](mailto:halepj@jmu.edu).

## From the Department Head *By Merle Mast (Ph.D., R.N., A.N.P.)*



AS SPRING MAKES its welcome sweep into the valley, I reflect on the many new beginnings in the Department of Nursing. Although the most obvious is the first-ever admission of students in January to double our Bachelor of Science in Nursing student numbers, there have been many other firsts. The first year of a new BSN curriculum designed to handle more students was phased in. Five new members joined the faculty, bringing our full-time faculty headcount to 22. Dr. Melody Eaton moved into a new role of BSN program coordinator.

Although it is hard to believe, the Master of Science in Nursing program is now in its third year, and Dr. Patty Hale was welcomed as the new MSN program coordinator. And a task force has been exploring the feasibility of beginning a Doctor of Nursing Practice program with a target start date of fall 2009. (If you would like to stay informed about the DNP, e-mail Dr. Patty Hale, [halepj@jmu.edu](mailto:halepj@jmu.edu)).

These changes have created a learning curve that includes plenty of challenges. However, the energy, enthusiasm and support for change have far exceeded the frustrations. The JMU administration has helped secure faculty positions, office space and equipment to support the department's growth. The clinical agencies in the region have worked with us to plan and provide excellent, creative and non-traditional practicum experiences for all levels of students. For example, several student groups enjoyed "power weekends" for their pediatric rotation at Carillion in Roanoke this year; and rising seniors look forward to an

expanded seven-week transition to their practice course next year. Faculty commitment, creativity and willingness to flex and change have been truly remarkable. Generous donors have helped nursing begin two new scholarships, including the yet-to-be-endowed Nursing Alumni Scholarship. The students – eager to enter the profession and facing competitive entry to the program – bring energy and excellence that motivates us all.

This is a formative and challenging time in health care and in nursing, but it is also a time of enormous opportunity. While the scope of change we are undertaking requires prudence and careful planning, it also invites us to challenge the status quo and to envision and welcome new possibilities. It is truly exhilarating to be on the creative edge of new programs that will make a difference in our nation's future health. I am proud that our department is seizing so many opportunities to grow nursing at JMU toward greater excellence.

## Reflections on the 25th Pinning Ceremony

*By Marcia Dake, Ph.D., R.N., department head 1982–89*

WHAT A THRILL it was for me to attend the 25th Pinning Celebration. In fact, I am always full of pride when I can be at JMU or talk about the nursing program. My pride is focused on JMU's leaders who bravely maintained their support through some very rough "growing pains." It is also focused on those many students and professors who have kept their faith and developed such an outstanding educational program.

It was so heartwarming to see the large number of young people receive not only their graduate pins but also distinguishing awards. Especially noteworthy was the large percentage of graduates who had achieved the high level of success as members of the coveted international nursing honor society, Sigma Theta Tau.

Whenever I reflect on "pinning" ceremonies, I am reminded of their historic predecessor — "capping" ceremonies. Historically, the nurses' cap was the highlight for nurses and was used by schools of nursing in different ways. The hospital school of nursing that I attended used the cap to distinguish the educational level of its wearer. Student caps during the first year had two small stripes on the left and on the right sides of the cap. Successful completion of the first year was rewarded by the removal of one set of stripes and success at the end of the second year resulted in removal of the other stripes. Thus, third year students wore plain white caps. At graduation, they received a dark blue velvet ribbon to cross the entire flap of the cap. As caps faded from the horizon

of nursing, so went the "capping" ceremonies, and "pinning" ceremonies have taken their place.

As I prepare this message, I am again full of anticipation for visiting JMU for the annual Spring Scholarship Luncheon. It is always heartwarming to learn of the great scholarship programs that exist and to meet so many worthy recipients. One of my lasting privileges is to have a small share in providing financial assistance to qualifying nursing students. This is one way in which I can "pay back" the assistance I received many years ago.

I continue to look forward with great anticipation to updates about JMU's dynamic nursing program.



Photo courtesy of Melinda Westhoff, Daily News-Record

*As a part of the Caregivers Community Network, JMU nursing student Brittany Coady ('09) attends to 93-year-old Harriet Courtney, who is blind and has Alzheimer's disease. This weekly visit provides primary caregivers, like Harriet's daughter, much needed time to run errands and focus on other matters.*

## Caregivers Community Network services touted by Commonwealth Council on Aging

THE CAREGIVERS Community Network has been recognized by the Commonwealth Council on Aging with a best practices award. CCN, a JMU-based volunteer network, helps central Shenandoah Valley caregivers tend to their elderly relatives with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Since 2001, CCN, a partnership with JMU's Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services, has strived to assist area caregivers by offering a variety of services that give caregivers some time for themselves. The services — including in-home respite and companion care, follow-up phone calls between visits, errand running and links to other community services — are provided by both JMU students and community volunteers.

"This award was the result of a review of many proposals and

was selected from a competitive field of applicants. Therefore, your organization should be very proud of its work," said Commonwealth Council on Aging Chairman Richard W. Lindsay. Lindsay made a special presentation of the award on Wednesday, May 16, at the Elder Alliance Annual Meeting at the JMU Festival Conference and Student Center.

"Being able to offer this service is just wonderful, a real blessing," said Vickie Landes, director of the program and a part of CCN since its beginning.

The CCN has received funding from the Virginia Department for Aging as an Alzheimer's Demonstration Model program since July 2001 and serves clients in Augusta, Page, Rockingham and Shenandoah counties and the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton and Waynesboro. The best

practices award was given in the education category.

In a narrative about CCN, Merle Mast, head of the JMU nursing department, wrote that "the greatest impact of the program lies in the intergenerational relationships between university students and their families. CCN activities provide the fieldwork for several popular elective and required courses for students in nursing, social work and other health and human service majors. More than 60 students per semester elect to work with CCN for college credit, and through their experiences they learn to understand and value both the needs of older adults and the ways they will serve an aging population as helping professionals."

More information about CCN is available on the Web site: <http://www.socwork.jmu.edu/Caregivers/>.

## Simulation is for real

STUDENTS IN SOME laboratory skills courses have noticed a new addition to their classes this semester — Sim Man. A technologically advanced mannequin, Sim Man has been incorporated into Advanced Skills and Transition to Practice courses to broaden student experiences. Sim Man allows students to practice nursing skills, communication skills, organization and prioritization without using real people. Procedures and skills that induce stress in students in the clinical setting are practiced within the safety of simulation.

Sim Man was introduced in the Advanced Skills course where juniors learn such skills as intravenous initiation, tracheostomy suctioning, nasogastric tube insertion, chest tube assessment and central line care. Students rotate through skills lab in groups of five

or six, participating in scenarios that course faculty have devised to incorporate skills students have recently learned in lab. Each simulation scenario takes place a week before students perform their return demonstration for faculty, allowing students to practice and ask questions as they work through the case.

Transition to Practice, a course created for second semester seniors, incorporates Sim Man with a different purpose. Four scenarios were devised focusing on medical/surgery, pediatrics and obstetrics. Students rotate through the lab, participating in each scenario once. Students are encouraged to work together to provide safe care for patients in each environment. Students follow physician orders, perform appropriate physical assessments, administer medi-



*Nursing student Lora Harvell ('07) practices her skills with Sim Man, a mannequin used in clinical setting simulations.*

cations, practice previously learned skills and work through unexpected problems that occur in the scenario. The course goal is that students begin to experience what it is like to be a "real nurse," making decisions and organizing care for patients while expecting the unexpected.

As nursing programs expand, and the number of clinical sites

decrease, simulated learning plays a very important role in nursing education. Students are able to practice clinical skills that they may not have the opportunity to perform in practicum and to practice in an environment free from the stress of failure or the fear of harming their patients.

## RN-BSN program recruits students

THIS HAS BEEN another exciting year for JMU's new RN-BSN program, which allows registered nurses with associate's degrees in nursing to move quickly through a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. In December 2006, the first alumni graduated and four more will follow in May. Two of the six initial program graduates have already applied to and/or been accepted into the Master of Science in Nursing programs at JMU and the University of Virginia. Marketing and recruitment efforts have continued to be a priority for program faculty and have yielded a strong group of potential candidates for the program. Next year's admission rates look even more promising as many students are finishing up prerequisite courses with a goal of entering the RN-BSN program.

The highlight of the year for the RN-BSN program is the completion of articulation agreements with area community colleges with associate's degree programs in nursing. This effort provides an alternative way for high school students to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Nursing

degree from JMU that is both cost effective and accessible to regional students. High school students who sign a letter of intent, maintain a grade-point average of 2.8 throughout their associate degree program and successfully pass the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses will be eligible for guaranteed admission into JMU's RN-BSN program. During their final two years at JMU, they will complete General Education and nursing courses for the baccalaureate degree. Participants in this agreement include Blue Ridge, Lord Fairfax, J. Sargent Reynolds and Piedmont Community Colleges. Students will begin entering into this agreement this fall and will enter the JMU completion program as early as fall 2009.

How can you help? If you know registered nurses seeking to complete their bachelor's degree, please have them contact Dr. Vicki Martin at (540) 568-3786 or martinvc@jmu.edu for further information. They may also visit the program's Web site at [www.nursing.jmu.edu](http://www.nursing.jmu.edu) and select

the RN-BSN tab for more information. All classes are held on Wednesdays and are heavily Web-enhanced, which minimizes the time that working nurses need to be on campus each semester. The program's aim is to empower nurses to move forward professionally in a flexible program that enables working nurses to maintain balance in their already busy lives.

JMU nursing faculty members do more than teach! Visit Our Web Site

[www.nursing.jmu.edu](http://www.nursing.jmu.edu)

for examples of the creative scholarship and service activities of our busy faculty members.

## Geriatric assessment pilot project launched

APRIL SAW THE START of a unique geriatric assessment effort. The Geriatric Assessment Model Pilot is a project developed jointly by the JMU Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services and Rockingham Memorial Hospital. In addition to the project coordinator, nursing faculty member Susan Conaty Buck, seven JMU health care faculty members and six RMH staff members are collaborating with a long-term goal of developing a Geriatric Assessment Center to serve the growing numbers of elderly in the local area. The pilot is funded by a grant secured by

Dr. Merle Mast from the Virginia Department on Aging.

The team has researched and developed a Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment Model featuring a multidimensional, multidisciplinary evaluation to determine medical, functional and psychosocial strengths and concerns for each elderly patient. Following each assessment, the team meets to form an individualized plan of care for the older adult. The project goal is to improve functional status and quality of life for many older adults and assist their family members.



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Dr. Jerry Benson, dean

Dr. Merle Mast, department head

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## "Senior" Prom becomes annual event

THE JMU Nursing Student Association hosted the second annual Senior Prom at the Festival Conference and Student Center on Oct. 4. The prom drew 375 seniors over age 65 from the valley, including nine area senior centers, for a luau-themed dance. For two hours, nursing students danced and chatted with the seniors while beach music and classics from the 1940s and 50s played in the background. JMU Dining Services supplied food for the event, which included sandwiches, potato salad, fresh fruit, veggies, homemade cookies, chips and cold drinks. Over 100 door prizes were distributed from local vendors as well as many handcrafted items

from community sponsors. Just as last year, senior participants were able to have individual and group photos taken at the event.

Hosted for the first time last year, the prom continues by popular demand. As guests entered the ballroom this year, they were already requesting country western as next year's theme. So, expect to don cowboy boots, wide-brimmed hats and practice "yeehaws" for next October's third annual Senior Prom!

Total cost for this year's prom was just under \$1,800. Generous gifts from the Elder Alliance, Augusta Medical Center and JMU Dining Services helped to make this event possible.





Bill McAnulty ('81),  
director of development

## Supporting future generations of nurses Nursing Alumni Scholarship Endowment established

THIS PAST YEAR has been one of celebration as the JMU nursing program looked back at the achievements of 25 years. In the spirit of celebrating its 25th anniversary, a new scholarship initiative was started on behalf of the department's alumni, faculty and staff. Dr. Marcia Dake, the first department head, made a significant initial gift to this important project. The goal is to raise a minimum of \$25,000.

Once the fund is fully endowed a scholarship will be awarded to a second semester junior nursing student. To be selected the student must demonstrate solid academic achievement and have financial need as determined by the university's Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

Please consider making a gift of \$50, \$150 or \$500 to support future nursing students at James Madison University. Checks should be made payable to the JMU Foundation Inc. with the memo line stating the gift is for the Nursing Alumni Scholarship (No. 25661). Gifts to the foundation are tax deductible. If you would like more information about this scholarship fund, please contact Bill McAnulty, director of development for the College of Integrated Science and Technology, at (540) 568-2570 or by e-mail at mcanulww@jmu.edu.

Mail your tax-deductible gifts to the following address or give online at [www.jmu.edu/give](http://www.jmu.edu/give) (see the box at the top of the Web page). Be sure to indicate fund No. 25661.

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Thanks for thinking of nursing! 2908

## Baccalaureate Nursing Program continued from Page 1

In 2006-07 the program enrolled 60 students in August and a second cohort of 40 in January. By 2007-08 the January enrollment will increase to 60 and will continue at 120 students per year. Admitting an additional cohort of students in January is welcome news to students awaiting admission.

Each of the four semesters of the nursing program will be taught every semester. Students now complete an introduction to nursing course with skills and clinical components during the sophomore year before entering the nursing program. The junior first semester is largely classroom-based with a single clinical experience, followed by a mostly clinical second semester. Similarly, the senior year will begin with a focused classroom semester followed by a practice-based final semester that includes

a seven-week capstone clinical practicum with a preceptor. "This plan will allow us to manage the number of students who require clinical placements each semester," Eaton explained.

Program growth brings challenges. "It is more challenging to learn student names and faces when there are so many more of them," said Mast. "Our graduating seniors always tell us how much they appreciate our supportive and caring faculty and the high quality of the program. These are important elements we don't want to lose as we grow." Mostly, however, the growth is exciting and the energy of the faculty and the students is high. As Eaton noted, "We are looking forward to graduating more highly qualified nurses who will make a difference in providing quality patient care."

## 1995 alumna remembered

MELANIE BETH Knuckles Joyce, class president and alumna of JMU nursing 1995 died unexpectedly in May 2006. Joyce worked at Roanoke Memorial and Martinsville hospitals. A wife, mother, active church member and volunteer, her death is mourned by many. "She was very involved in our nursing class and was so well loved that I know our classmates would like to be informed of her unfortunate passing," wrote Julie Reed, fellow alumna. In her memory, a memorial fund was established for her children: Melanie Joyce Memorial Fund, Martinsville Dupont Credit Union, MDCU 41 Wheeler Avenue, Collinsville, VA 24078; Phone (276) 632-1679.



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Nurses have the privilege of knowing all aspects of patients and their families. They willingly spend time to build relationships that work toward health promotion. Nurses are the largest group of health care providers in the country, and our collective voice can make a difference.

– *Cathy Webb*

**CATHY WEBB**  
**PEDIATRIC NURSE AND NURSING INSTRUCTOR**  
LIKE MANY PEDIATRIC NURSES, Cathy knows first-hand that parenting a child with special needs can be overwhelming. But her role as a JMU nursing instructor led her to devise an ingenious way to provide some help. She developed a respite program for children with disabilities and their parents that pairs JMU nursing students with families in need of help. The Claude Moore Precious Time Program assigns students to work in pairs with an assigned family throughout a semester. The program does far more than provide parents with a much-needed break. Students learn to “see” the child beneath the disability and get to develop relationships with some extraordinary families. This unique campus/community partnership definitely puts the power of knowledge to work, and the result is enriched lives for all the participants.



[www.jmu.edu/BeTheChange](http://www.jmu.edu/BeTheChange)

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