

# ASPIRE

THE KIRKHOF COLLEGE OF NURSING | GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



## Voice and Professional Identity

The importance of voice p. 2

Thinking about advancing your education? p. 21

What makes a nurse? p. 31

# The voice of nursing – the most trusted profession

For nearly two decades, nursing has been named America's most trusted profession.\* At Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing, we believe this is because core values are the foundation of a nurse's professional identity and influence. As individuals, education, and the profession converge, the unique essence of nursing emerges to transform the world. We believe it's time for the voice of the most trusted profession to be heard.



# ASPIRE

A publication of Grand Valley's  
Kirkhof College of Nursing

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A special thanks goes to all who shared their stories and photos with us. This magazine would not be possible without the many students, faculty, staff, alumni, partners and friends who make it come alive.

The baccalaureate degree program in nursing, master's degree program in nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice program at Grand Valley State University Kirkhof College of Nursing are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.  
<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>



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**On the back cover:** Philomena V. Mantella began her tenure as president of Grand Valley State University on July 1, 2019. As one of higher education's leading entrepreneurs, she is a recognized leader in strategic thinking, market dynamics, and innovation in the way education is delivered. Her innovative drive comes from more than 30 years in higher education administration. We welcome her leadership, and we will reach higher together.



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE

To better understand why nurses must move from silence to voice, it is important to consider cultural characteristics of the discipline, the origins of the silence, and how stereotypes help to keep it in place.

It is difficult to admit, but many people in today's society do not fully understand what nurses do. They are not aware of the complexity of nursing nor do they understand the brilliance that lies within well-educated nurses.

This is our issue and we should address it. Every one of us can do something right now.

## **Speak up.**

Some of us are comfortable with it and some are not, but we all need to put aside nursing's heritage of modesty and silence to better represent our knowledge, expertise, wisdom and contributions.

Why is your voice needed? There are important benefits to be gained. Patient care and safety improve when we offer ideas for change and collaborate at decision-making tables. Our professional identity improves when the public has a better understanding of our expertise.

The work of Nancy Crigger, PhD, MA, FNP-BC, and Nelda Godfrey, PhD, ACNS-BC, FAAN, promotes a robust and morally resilient professional nursing identity that fosters growth throughout one's career. The silence to voice direction promotes a reflective perspective that can contribute to a lifelong insight into what it means to be a nurse. Using your voice supports the dynamic process of being a professional nurse and expanding the possibilities for action, influence, and transformation.

**And, as our voices and confidence grow, I believe more talented nurses will stay in the profession, serving as role models and mentors for the next generation.**

For centuries, nurses have been associated with hearts, flowers, cuddly animals, and angels, which are meant to represent a gentle touch, caring, dedication, and kindness. But these icons tell only part of the story. What's missing is the nurses' scientific knowledge, life-saving skills, and courage.

Writers of popular TV shows and movies often depict nurses in demeaning and subservient roles. Story lines focus on intimate relationships and escapades rather than on mutual respect, professional collaboration, or even patient care. These fictional portrayals of nurses can easily alter people's perception of our profession. We need to overcome this fiction.

It is still common for nurses to deflect attention and remain silent about their scope of knowledge and ability. Many believe that caring work can only be accomplished in the context of silence. If nurses were to boast about their accomplishments, they could reveal intimate details about themselves or their patients. They also could risk a transformation from altruism into narcissism, thus nullifying whatever good acts they performed.



## But of course, this isn't true.

So it's up to each of us to speak up and share perspectives as we live our professional identity.

I applaud the work of Bernice Buresh and Suzanne Gordon, *From Silence to Voice*, and encourage you to read or re-read it. This book is a call to action for nurses in every practice setting. It notes nursing's longstanding absence from and silence in the public eye and suggests numerous benefits that could emerge if the voice of nursing were louder.

Although it has been nearly 20 years since it was first published, *From Silence to Voice* brings us a clear and urgent message. Updated editions, released in 2006 and 2013, continue to emphasize the importance of using voice to inform the public and to promote this blueprint for action. In this issue of ASPIRE, we are showing how our GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing students, alumni, faculty and partners are making a difference and making themselves heard. In addition to caring and healing, these nurses are using their voices to educate, motivate and initiate change in their communities. They are resourceful, innovative and inspirational, and they understand how building professional identity begins in education and flourishes throughout a career.

## How you use your voice is up to you.

I encourage each of you to recognize your own contributions and those of your fellow nurses starting today. Do this in a way that helps people understand the depth of our specialized knowledge and expertise. Everyone should know how nurses contribute to the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities so they will trust us, work alongside us, insist on our contributions for important decision-making and advocacy, and give serious consideration to using their voices to join us.

*Cynthia McCurren*

Cynthia McCurren, PhD, RN, FNP  
Dean and Professor  
Kirkhof College of Nursing

“

Nurses minister to vulnerable people in their time of need. In this age of social disconnect, we choose to purposefully interact with our patients and provide them with hands-on, skilled, and compassionate care. I am humbled and proud that this is my calling.



– Lesli E. Teed, BSN, RN  
MSN Student

”

“

We bring a soft and comforting touch to the often-sharp knife of medicine. Our care is holistic, treating every aspect of a patient's health, soothing patient and family anxiety through education and support, and providing patients with a much-needed voice of advocacy. Nurses are the nurturers of the world.



– Cory J. Mills, RN, BSN  
DNP Student,  
adult/older adult

”

“

Making efforts to bridge the healthcare disparity gaps affecting underrepresented communities will be the most challenging, yet most important step in changing the world. Ultimately, my goal will be to establish a new voice in these communities, one that advocates for them to receive the best standard of healthcare and nothing less.



– Anthony Jacobs  
BSN Student

”



# High-impact clinical experiences translate into sustainable improvements

At Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON), academic practice partnerships play an important role in nursing education. They also serve as a critical mechanism for community organizations to further their missions by connecting talented nursing students with projects they may not have the resources to complete themselves. KCON's relationship with Exalta Health is an example of leveraging experiences for mutual benefit.

According to Dianne Slager, DNP, FNP, assistant professor at KCON and a 15-year nurse practitioner volunteer at Exalta Health, the organization has made a difference in numerous Healthy People 2020 measures, including decreasing emergency room visits while also providing a safe place for care to the underserved in the greater Grand Rapids area.

**Thanks to a strong partnership, KCON Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students complete clinical immersions and final projects at Exalta Health. This has become a clinical setting where nurses can build on their knowledge and develop their practice in an environment where the social determinants of health impact patients and their families.**

KCON's DNP curriculum is consistent with the national agenda to transform American healthcare through interprofessional collaboration, healthcare policy advocacy, patient-centered care, quality/safety initiatives, and the use of informatics. The program offers two emphasis areas, advanced nursing practice (child/adolescent or adult/older adult) and health systems leadership.

"DNP immersions are longer than other rotations," explained Laura VanderMolen, DO, medical director at Exalta Health. "These nurses see patients over and over so they can dig deeper and become very helpful, often learning about their lives, joys, and kids. It's a cultural growth experience where nursing students can practice care for the whole person."

Laura Love, a 2012 KCON BSN graduate and current DNP student, is completing her clinical immersion at Exalta Health. She agrees that clinical experiences are integral to role development for the nurse practitioner.

"Because of my experiences at Exalta, I am becoming a nurse practitioner who thinks critically and provides evidence-based, compassionate, primary care," she said.

"The physicians and staff at Exalta welcome students," Love added. "They have created an environment that is conducive

to clinical learning. As a student, I have the opportunity to thoughtfully evaluate the patient's symptoms in order to develop a differential diagnosis and plan of care."

In addition to clinical immersions at Exalta, several KCON DNP students have completed their final projects there, which has benefited the organization and their patient population in a variety of ways.

“From a higher perspective, we’re always trying to understand more about our patients. We try to learn why they wait to get medical treatment. If they choose not to get help, why? Who helps them get to that next level of care? We want it to be us.”

– Laura VanderMolen

### About Exalta Health

Exalta Health, a faith-based organization, offers medical, vision, dental, behavioral, and spiritual care services. They serve people of any age, ethnicity, language, gender, disability, religion, or creed with a professional staff and over 200 volunteers annually. [exaltahealth.org](http://exaltahealth.org)



## KCON DNP Student Projects at Exalta Health

### Implementation of the Vaccines for Children Program in a Midwest, Urban Clinic Dedicated to the Underserved Population

By Akmal Saydazamov, KCON DNP '19

### Implementation of Evidence-based Culturally Adapted Interventions, Collaborative Care, and Change Management for Improved Mental Health Outcomes in a Community-based Safety-net Clinic

By Laura E. Hall, KCON DNP '18

### A Quality Improvement Program in a Safety-net Clinic Serving Vulnerable Populations

By Kaitlin J. Hendriksma, KCON DNP '17

### A Need for a Culturally Congruent Obesity Intervention at a Community Safety-net Clinic

By Claudia D. Rivera-Salas, KCON DNP '15

Visit [scholarworks@gvsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gvsu.edu) to read abstracts and download student project papers.





# Patients ask and receive

Born and raised in West Michigan, Thomas Sikkema, RN, BSN '18, has worked with the healthcare system as a patient, a nurse, and an entrepreneur. In that order.

While in high school, he was diagnosed with a rare brain tumor. Multiple surgeries, hospitalizations, and treatments followed.

"I got very lucky," Sikkema said. "If I had gone undiagnosed for one or two more months, I'd be dead."

He's been in remission since 2013 and was given a clean bill of health in November 2018. He also walked out with a new mission.

"I was very curious, and I wanted to do something in healthcare," he said.



"I was inspired by my nurse after admission. Now I'm working on the floor where I was treated."

His personal experience helps him empathize with his pediatric patients and their families.

"I'm very careful about the professional line – careful about telling my story," Sikkema said. "You learn how to share a few words with the family. Usually kids learn I've been through it and I understand."

Sikkema said he chose Grand Valley State University because he wanted to stay in West Michigan and the nursing program is one of the best in the Midwest.

While in the nursing program, Sikkema became aware of a community need for non-emergency medical transportation. He and his brother, Bradyn, a finance and accounting major at Grand Valley, developed a business proposal and started Ride Your Way, a wheelchair transportation provider.

They were also winners in the 2018 Grand Valley Laker Effect Challenge, a university competition for students solving real-world problems and providing leadership for community organizations.





“We have a special van that lets clients sit up front,” Sikkema said. “They love what we’ve got. They can converse with the driver in comfort. Many people feel very vulnerable in a wheelchair and the ride in the back of an ambulance or a traditional van can be very rough.

“With us, clients are just as comfortable as the driver,” he added. Clients even pick the music, which is important because music can be very therapeutic. Some patients use Ride Your Way on a weekly basis and build a bond with the driver.

Ride Your Way drivers help clients leave their homes if needed and make sure they get inside at their destination. There’s no waiting at the curb. Passengers are welcome to ride along for no extra charge. Clients have been taken to medical appointments, weddings, funerals, dates, church, sporting events, and the grocery store.

“Being a nurse entrepreneur brings two parts of the world together than don’t usually have a lot of overlap,” Sikkema said. “But they can complement each other.”

Sikkema added that Ride Your Way gives him the opportunity to be the voice for patients, the voice of the patient and the voice of the business owner.



### About Thomas Sikkema

Sikkema says that cancer is the best thing that ever happened to him. His clinical work is done at Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he helps treat oncology patients and their families. He’s also committed to the community, which motivated him to co-found Ride Your Way, [rideyourwaygr.com](http://rideyourwaygr.com).

“Making your voice heard is the most important thing you can ever do.”

– Thomas Sikkema



# The intersection of science and compassion

As she helps nursing students progress in their studies, Lori Houghton-Rahrig encourages them to pursue evidence-based practice and apply science-based logic. She recommends action over ignorance. And she advises nurses to continue their education and to work as a team.

“Nurses need to be compassionate problem-solvers,” she explained. “You make kind decisions based on hard-core scientific knowledge.”

Nursing is many things to many people. For Lori Houghton-Rahrig, PhD, MSN '01, BSN '81, RN, it's how she combines her commitment to science, scholarship, students, and service.

In her role as associate professor with Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON), Houghton-Rahrig uses her voice in both service and leadership. She's helped educate thousands of nurses and broadened their horizons by encouraging them to embrace opportunities.

“When I was a critical care nurse early in my career, I was a preceptor for long periods of time,” she said. “I liked mentoring the new nurses and helping them learn. And I always wanted to learn more myself. Getting a master's degree and teaching nursing has been a goal since high school. Then after I became an adjunct, I wanted to become a professor.”

## Starting with science

Her passion for science led her to study the health promotion and disease prevention of obesity-related non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). Her work was the first to examine a comprehensive symptom experience in adults with NAFLD and to measure health-related quality of life with a gene indicated in the progression of the disease.



**“I learned that the study of genetics is exploding and as healthcare providers, we are only beginning to use this information,” Houghton-Rahrig said.**

**“Eventually, most everything we do in health care will be driven from the information gained from analyzing our genetic makeup and using precision medicine.”**

## Supporting students

There are many examples of Houghton-Rahrig's service to KCON students and the field of nursing. She regularly cooks for her students and invites them to her home because she remembers what it's like to be a student and part of nursing is getting to know people.

She and her husband, Kevin Rahrig '80, are lead donors for the Daniel and Pamela DeVos Center for Interprofessional Health, the third building in the GVSU Health Campus, helping to accommodate expanding programs for undergraduate and graduate students. They also established the Teri Linn (Houghton) Marsh Endowed Memorial Nursing Scholarship for nursing students. They are also lead donors to the Jamie Hosford Football Center. The Kevin Rahrig '80 and Lori Houghton-Rahrig '81, '01 Player Entrance is named in their honor.

“We have great students here, that's why we give,” she said.







**Lori Houghton-Rahrig serves on GVSU's Laker Effect Challenge committee and works closely with KCON students and community partners as they present winning ideas to improve access to quality care.**



## About Lori Houghton-Rahrig

Houghton-Rahrig was chosen to study at the 2010 National Institute of Nursing Research Summer Genetics Institute with just 23 other students. She attended lectures by famous genetic scientists and had hands-on experiences in the lab learning a variety of molecular genetics methods.

In addition to teaching, she collaborates with faculty at GVSU on studies related to her research on NAFLD such as diet, moderate-to-vigorous exercise, and obesity as related to inflammatory markers and health-related quality of life. An example is her work with faculty from the cell and molecular biology department using samples from Houghton-Rahrig's dissertation study to analyze another gene potentially associated with the disease.

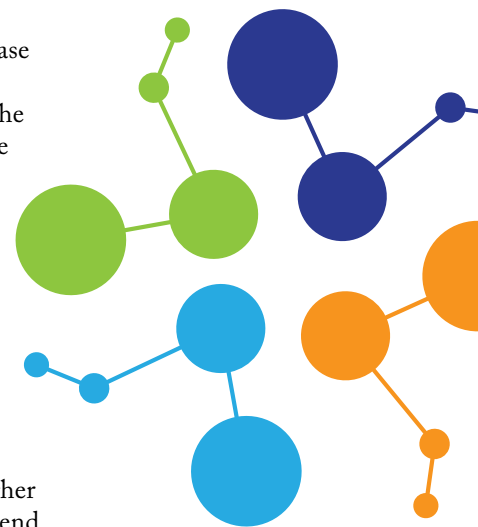
## About Houghton-Rahrig's research

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is defined as the presence of fatty deposits in the liver cells that comprises more than five percent of the total liver weight in the absence or minimal use of alcohol. It is strongly associated with obesity and insulin resistance.

People who have NAFLD may have a polymorphism (PNPLA3 gene, rs738409-G allele) that places them at higher risk of disease progression to end stage liver disease. Houghton-Rahrig uses this gene to stratify biological and behavioral differences between those who have no copies of the PNPLA3 gene, rs738409-G allele and those who have one or two copies of this polymorphism. She has compared symptom experiences and health-related quality of life between these two groups and is working to expand this study into other populations in which NAFLD is comorbid.

This research is important to Houghton-Rahrig because her sister, Teri Linn (Houghton) Marsh (1960-2006), died from NAFLD.

"She was an amazing person—with a very contagious laugh and great sense of humor—who believed in promoting education," Houghton-Rahrig said. Perhaps these traits also are genetic.



# Building professional identity begins in education



While helping a midwife deliver a baby in Ghana, West Africa, Regina Kirwin, DNP '19, RN, CPNP/PC, CLC, discovered her passion.

“I experienced so much there,” she said. “When I had the opportunity to work in the hospital and see the nurses connecting with the patients, I realized I was meant to be a nurse.”

When she got back to the states, Kirwin applied for Grand Valley’s traditional nursing baccalaureate program in addition to the biomedical sciences degree she was pursuing. She completed both degrees and went on to the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program to become a child/adolescent primary care nurse practitioner.

One of the highlights of her DNP program was working with associate professor Kelli Damstra, DNP '12, MSN, RN.

“Dr. Damstra was my mentor and I was her teaching assistant for three years,” Kirwin explained. “She also served as committee chair for my DNP project.”

Grand Valley’s Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) faculty members collaborate with students to help them combine their personal interests with career aspirations and build their professional identity.

When an opportunity arose to work with a groundbreaking community health initiative, Damstra knew that Kirwin would be interested. The program, part of Healthy Kent Breastfeeding Coalition within the Kent County Health Department, focused on training peer mentors who could counsel African American mothers about breastfeeding.

Damstra explained that the rate of breastfeeding is lower in African Americans than in other racial/ethnic groups at the point of initiation, for children who are breastfed exclusively through six months and for those breastfed at 12 months.

“I was waiting for a pediatric-focused opportunity for my DNP project,” Kirwin said. “Then I had a son and struggled with breastfeeding. That became my breakthrough and I understood the need for more focus on this issue.”



“Regina brought the passion of a young working mom,” said Damstra. “She also helped remove barriers to bridge a gap between this community and the healthcare system.”

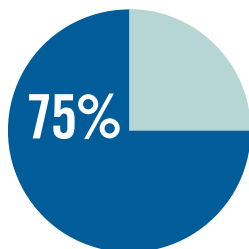
With support from Damstra, Kirwin created a mentor toolkit to help community organizers track data to support sustainability of the program and apply for future grants.

“My DNP project didn’t seem like work because I was so personally involved and excited about it,” Kirwin said.

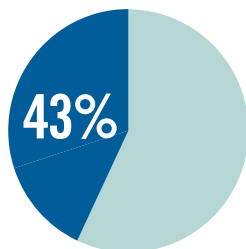
## How many American mothers breastfeed their babies?

### All mothers in the U.S.

At birth

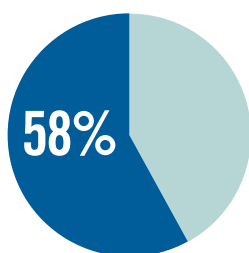


At the end of six months

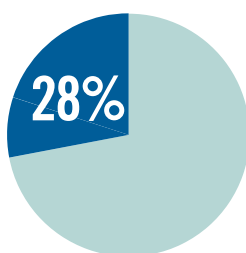


### African American mothers in the U.S.

At birth



At the end of six months



## The Healthy People 2020 objectives for breastfeeding:

**82%** are ever breastfed,  
**61%** at six months,  
 and **34%** at one year.

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, [hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/breastfeeding/factsheet/index.html](https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/breastfeeding/factsheet/index.html)

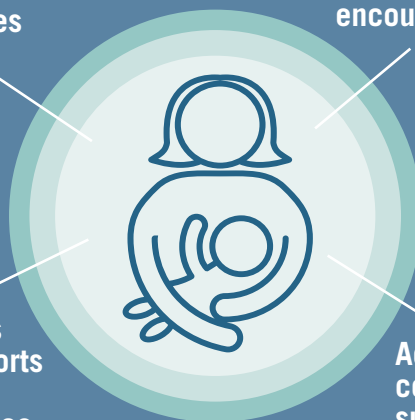
## External factors influence breastfeeding success

Hospital practices

Education & encouragement

Policies or supports in the workplace

Access to community supports



Kirwin’s DNP project addressed several of these factors. It also served as an important opportunity for her education, experience, and voice to merge.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2010 Breastfeeding Report Card

## About Regina Kirwin

Kirwin combines her professional and personal passions by teaching classes and helping students find their voices in maternal, infant, and child healthcare. She continues to seek new learning opportunities and aspires to work with underserved populations where she can leave a lasting impact.



## About Kelli Damstra

Damstra has been part of the KCON faculty since 2009. Her area of scholarship and interest is improving maternal and infant health through breastfeeding. Her teaching includes maternal/child nursing and she has served as the obstetrical clinical coordinator for Clinical Nursing III since 2015.



# Advance care planning brings peace

Inspired by 30 years of critical and palliative care experience and backed by an impressive list of credentials, Carol Robinson, DNP '12, MS, BSN, RN, CHPN®, now specializes in helping people plan. She has seen the difficulty and heartbreak that can happen when end-of-life plans aren't in place, and as the community coordinator of Making Choices Michigan, she's helping individuals and families be proactive.

Robinson estimates that she's talked with more than 8,000 community members about their end-of-life choices. She also teaches volunteers to help others approach this topic, which broadens the reach of the Making Choices Michigan team. Every conversation benefits from the experience, perspective, and compassion that she accumulated throughout her nursing career.

"My career is unique in that one thing led to another," she added. "My education and experience have jelled."

"The thing I like about Grand Valley faculty members is that they really get to know you and invest in you," Robinson said. "For example, Dean McCurren knew the president of Making Choices Michigan and told me about this opportunity."

According to Robinson, end-of-life planning is helpful for patients, families and healthcare providers. And it helps healthcare providers align treatment choices with a patient's preferences for care.



Early in her career, Robinson worked on an intensive care unit where she often saw families thrown into the middle of disagreements over a loved one's care. By waiting until there's an emergency, she said, the conversations became difficult, and a critical care setting is the worst place to make critical decisions.

“People will sometimes tell a nurse what they can't tell their family.”

– Carol Robinson



Making Choices Michigan takes a holistic approach to advance care planning by encouraging people to consider quality of life rather than the quantity. Helping people record their wishes in a legal document that is stored in an online information exchange allows healthcare providers access as needed.

Sometimes, patients are in a condition that doesn't allow them to write or speak, so it's important to identify a patient advocate. Planning ahead gives people and their advocates clarity and peace of mind so they're ready to take the desired actions.

"We are in a death-defying society," Robinson said. "The circle of life is sterilized."

As an example, she mentioned that most people don't understand life support, even though this is the standard default for end-of-life care.

"Life support is beautiful, but it can also be considered overtreatment for someone who wants to die peacefully at home," she added.

Many non-profits also turn to Making Choices Michigan to help their constituents, Robinson explained. The Grand Rapids Housing Commission and Grand Valley's Kaufman Interfaith Institute are two organizations that Robinson and her team support.

"This model works because it's value-neutral," Robinson said. "It focuses on who you are as a person, including how your relationships, culture, and spiritual beliefs play into your preferences for living life well."



## About Carol Robinson

Robinson has had an extensive nursing career that includes both clinical and administrative leadership positions. Her commitment to caring for chronically ill patients and their families fueled her passion for patient and family communications about end-of-life treatment preferences.



She believes there are plenty of opportunities for nurses to find paths that will allow them think in new and different ways, and she furthers this belief with action. In honor of Dr. Linda. D. Scott, PHD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, a former Grand Valley Kirkhof College of Nursing faculty member and administrator, Robinson has established a scholarship to assist non-traditional nursing students who embody leadership while balancing work/school responsibilities.

## About Making Choices Michigan

Established in 2010, Making Choices Michigan is a program arm of Great Lakes Health Connect, a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit. MCM is a community-driven collaborative committed to:

- Helping people discuss, decide, and determine their preferences for future healthcare
- Documenting those preferences in an advance directive
- Making the document available to healthcare providers across Michigan
- Educating the healthcare community to help them honor a person's advance directive to ensure that their preferences are respected

The people of Making Choices Michigan believe every person should be empowered to advocate for their personal health by identifying their preferences for healthcare and that these preferences should be honored by healthcare providers.

Additional information is available at [makingchoicesmichigan.org](http://makingchoicesmichigan.org).

# Advocating for better mental health care



For more than four decades, Col. (Dr.) Louis Sytsma, ND, PMHNP, FNP, USAF (Ret), MSN, BSN '74, has used his voice to address mental health needs. He was one of 12 students in Grand Valley's first class of nursing graduates and has practiced in many capacities around the world. Now retired, Sytsma offers visionary advice to today's nurses based on his wide range of experience.

## Take advantage of every opportunity to continue learning.

Sytsma says you can never know enough nor should you think you know everything. Understand the legal and ethical implications of your scope of practice and use common sense. He found his education and experience as an FNP to be invaluable. Continuing education is very important for maintaining your skills and staying current. Be a critical consumer of research and new treatment methods.

## Maintain a solid support system.

An important recommendation for mental health practitioners is to have your own therapist. Sytsma considers therapy to be additional education and training. Family and friends are important too. He's been married to Marilyn, a social worker, for more than 50 years. Especially in the mental health field, it's important to be able to maintain your boundaries and a healthy sense of self-awareness. Don't own your patient's issues – help them take an active role in identifying and solving their problems.

## Establish your professional identity.

Act as if your voice is needed and you have something worthwhile to contribute. Collaboration is essential. Talk to other professionals. Ask for advice and counsel. The idea of integrated or collaborative primary and psychiatric care is still in its early stages but is critical to success. Mental health issues are often directly related to physical complaints. Until mental and physical health are treated with parity, nothing will change or improve. Don't be afraid to think outside the box. Know who you are, learn from your mistakes, and build your self-confidence.

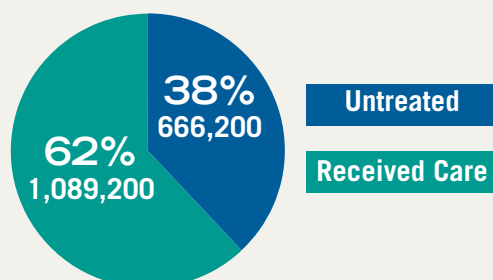
### About Louis Sytsma

Sytsma has practiced in a wide range of military and civilian healthcare provider roles and settings. He has spent his career advocating for psychiatric/mental health patients and has always been a proponent of the multi-disciplinary, integrated healthcare model. He and his family have relocated for many assignments and service opportunities and have relied on their faith for personal and professional guidance and support. Sytsma has also strived to consistently follow the U.S. Air Force core values: Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.



## Many Michigan residents with mental health conditions are not receiving treatment

### Overall access to mental health care in Michigan



Of a total Michigan population of 9.9 million, it is estimated that 1.76 million experience mental illness. Mental Health America ranked Michigan 15th and 18th in recent years on access to mental health care in comparison with the rest of the United States.

Source: [mihealthfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/BehavioralHealthAccessBrief\\_PrivateIns.pdf](https://mihealthfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/BehavioralHealthAccessBrief_PrivateIns.pdf)



# Introducing KCON's Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Certificate

In response to our nation's mental health treatment crisis, KCON is offering a new post-master's certificate designed to prepare nurse practitioners to provide advanced mental health treatment to individuals with mental health disorders.

PMHNPs are uniquely qualified to fill the workforce gaps in the mental health system and have an important perspective on both the physical and mental health needs of people who seek care.

Courses focus on growth and development across a person's lifespan, psychopharmacology, theories of mental health and personality, treatment modalities (individual, group, and family), and practicum experiences.

This program is via hybrid delivery, which combines online learning with high-impact in-person experiences. Ten to 15 credits can be earned, depending on previous coursework completed.

For more information, contact Linda Buck, senior academic advisor, at 616.331.7160 or [buckli@gvsu.edu](mailto:buckli@gvsu.edu) and visit [gvsu.edu/kcon/pmhnp](http://gvsu.edu/kcon/pmhnp).



# Wisdom

from experienced  
nurses to rising  
professionals

We invited nurses from across care settings to share stories and experiences that formed their professional identity, growth, insight, and wisdom. Exposure to these stories in the formative stages of education allows nursing students to increase the breadth of their identity beyond technical skills and memorization, to embrace discovered meaning, and to envision how they will find their own meaning. Being comfortable with their professional identity also can advance their efforts to become nurses who have an accurate and strong voice.

## How important are personal connections to your work?

"I get to work with families that have children with special health care needs or are just being diagnosed with a condition they are not expecting. I have the honor and privilege, along with my team, to be present for those families and to help them navigate the healthcare system. My oldest son has special needs, so I understand. If you can meld some of your personal experiences into what you do in nursing, it brings an enormous reward."



**Chris Buzcek, RN, BSN '92 - Public Health Program Supervisor,  
Kent County Health Department**  
*26 years in nursing*

## What meaningful contributions do nurses make?

"As nurses, we are uniquely placed in the lives of patients and families, no matter what part of the journey they're on. We want to fix things and make everybody better, but I've learned you can't always do that. You can help some patients through their journey and see them go on to live for years and years. For the patients you can't fix, you can still help them on their journey to the end and to die with dignity."



**Debbie Stoutjesdyk, BSN, RN, OCN - Oncology Nurse, Spectrum Health**  
*41 years in nursing*

## How do you use your voice?

"It's really important to know who you are as a person and a nurse in order to engage and develop relationships, especially with patients. We are the only professionals who can do what we do. We can walk into a room and immediately connect. We can meet a patient right where they are and open ourselves to what they can give back to us."



**Petra Rotzell, MSN, RN, CMSRN**  
**Nurse Educator, ED Observation Services, Spectrum Health**  
*41 years in nursing*

## What helped your professional growth?

"My experiences as a patient really informed my growth as a nurse. I learned the discomfort of not knowing, to accept that I am human, and that the rules apply to me too. Just because I'm in healthcare does not make me immune to health issues. Knowing this has helped me in my role as an academic advisor for nursing students. I can sense where a student is even if they can't verbalize it. I can help them move forward."



**Linda Buck, DNP '17, RN - Senior Academic Advisor, KCON**  
*44 years in nursing*



# Data-driven decisions improve population health

## The voice of Lynette Schreur, project and quality manager at Exalta Health

Lynette Schreur, RN, BSN '01, started her career started her career studying metallurgy at Michigan Technological University, a school known for science, engineering, technology, and mathematics. For family reasons, she transferred to Grand Valley State University and chose to study nursing. After graduation she was drawn to Exalta Health because it aligned with her personal values and her professional aspirations.

**Q: How does your nursing experience contribute to your role as project and quality manager?**

**A:** I work extensively with data and my clinical background helps with interpretation. Sometimes there are things I know instinctively because I'm a nurse – like if diagnostic codes or medications are correct. Sometimes I can even rule out ideas from the beginning.

My clinical education has been very valuable. For example, as a healthcare clinic, we need to be sure we're offering quality patient care, programs, and initiatives—and a safe environment for employees, which includes compliance with Occupational Health and Safety Administration guidelines. My experience helps me understand both perspectives.

**Q: What's unique about your job?**

**A:** We're a small organization and not all small places have somebody who does this job. Bigger places have positions with more narrowly defined roles. But the beauty in having one person do it all is that I can take a critical look at proposed ideas and rely on data to guide us.

I can also share that data with people who help us. For example, we've been able to provide GVSU students with data for their projects that help us improve patient care and the overall health of our patient population.

**Q: How does Exalta Health use data to improve patient care?**

**A:** On the patient side, we examine the best evidence as we evaluate new projects and the potential to be successful with our patients and our practice. We also use data when we consider changes to our work processes. I built a database to evaluate tests results and patient data over time that enables us to monitor changes in individual patient health. The database, in conjunction with our electronic health records, lets us know if interventions are working or if patients need follow-up. For example, we have a notice set to remind us when patients are due for their colon screening. We also monitor the progress of our diabetic and hypertensive patients. Our staff and volunteers can contact patients and help if there are issues with access to needed care or if patients have questions about their care plan.

**Q: How do you use your voice in this role?**

**A:** With data in hand, I can advocate for improved patient care and improve our providers' experiences. I have the opportunity to focus on continuous improvement and give feedback. My voice can have a big impact because our president and our leadership team are very good listeners.



# Meet our KCON Advisory Board

At Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing, we rely on a 12-member advisory board to help us interpret trends impacting nursing education and the health of our communities. Their involvement enables us to develop engagement opportunities and partnerships that benefit our students.

We are incredibly grateful to each of these individuals for generously sharing their ***SUPERPOWERS*** and helping us create an impactful learning environment.



**Hattie Tinney**  
Deputy Executive Director  
Grand Rapids Housing Commission  
***OBJECTIVITY & DEDICATION***



**Maureen Kirkwood**  
Executive Director  
HealthNet of West Michigan  
***MAKING CONNECTIONS & MOTIVATING OTHERS***



**Kurt Reppart**  
City Commissioner  
City of Grand Rapids  
***LEADING WITH KINDNESS & EMPATHY***



**Kathy Speeter ('13)**  
Nurse Practitioner  
InterAct of Michigan/Pine Rest  
Christian Mental Health Services  
***COMMUNICATING & ALWAYS LEARNING***



**Ron Jimmerson**  
Executive Director & Co-founder  
Seeds of Promise  
***VISION & SPIRITUAL STRENGTH***



**Mary Menchinger**  
Community Member  
Retired Director of Nursing  
***SEEING THE BIG PICTURE & SUPPORTING OTHERS***



**Kathy Chapman**  
Chief Clinical Officer  
Allegan General Hospital | Ascension  
***COMPASSION & ENCOURAGEMENT***



**Ruth Stegeman**  
Principal  
THINC Consulting  
***MANAGING POLARITIES***



**Jose Orozco**  
Director of Family Engagement & Team Lead  
Kent School Services Network  
***RELATIONSHIPS & LEVERAGING CULTURAL INTERSECTIONS***



**Cris Kutzli**  
Challenge Scholars Program Director  
Grand Rapids Community Foundation  
***NEVER GIVING UP***



**Melodee VandenBosch ('79, '03)**  
Associate Professor  
Kirkhof College of Nursing  
***UNDERSTANDING & HOSPITALITY***



**Denise Evans**  
Project Coordinator  
Spectrum Health - Strong Beginnings  
***COMMUNITY BUILDING & HOPEFULNESS***



# *Bodies Revealed*

– A high-impact learning experience for KCON students



When the organizers at Grand Rapids Public Museum planned a return of the popular *Bodies Revealed* exhibit, they knew their guests would enjoy having expert guides. Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) students, faculty, and alumni were the perfect fit, bringing enthusiasm and experience to the highly scientific exhibit that includes real, whole, and partial body specimens preserved through an innovative process.

“We are committed to offering personal, challenging, and transformational experiences that support students on their journey to academic excellence and a professional career. By actively engaging learners in high-impact experiences like this, students translate what they've learned into practice. This is an opportunity they won't soon forget.”

– Cynthia McCurren, KCON Dean



KCON is serving as a healthcare partner during the *Bodies Revealed* exhibit from November 2019 through May 2020. During opening weekend, 25 members of the GVSU Student Nurses' Association talked with museum guests about the skeletal, muscular, nervous, digestive, respiratory, reproductive, and circulatory systems on display. Additional groups of students and alumni will volunteer on select Saturdays during the exhibit's run to help visitors learn about their own bodies and how to take better care of themselves and make positive lifestyle choices.

In addition, 15 KCON students in their first semester of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program presented posters on December 5, 2019, as part of their pathophysiology course. The posters corresponded with a specimen inside the *Bodies Revealed* exhibit and reflected how disease affects the structure of the body, how the resulting abnormal function will lead to symptoms, and how other exam findings allow a healthcare professional to diagnose and treat disease.



## NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

### Helene Fuld Health Trust Accelerated Second Degree Nursing Endowed Scholarship (see grants)

To assist students with the costs of the Accelerated Second Degree Baccalaureate Nursing Program.

### Grace Huizinga Endowed Scholarship

To assist historically underrepresented students in the Kirkhof College of Nursing or College of Health Professions, including students of color, ELS, and LGBTQIA.

### Dr. Linda D. Scott Nursing Student Success Scholarship

To assist non-traditional Kirkhof College of Nursing students who embody leadership and balancing work and school responsibilities.

**35** | scholarships & assistance funds available



Visit [gvsu.edu/kcon/giving](https://gvsu.edu/kcon/giving) for more information.

# Thinking about advancing your education?

Follow Julie Hubner's journey from RN to BSN and into the DNP



“I started the RN to BSN program thinking I would go to class, do my assignments, and graduate, end of story. The hybrid program was so much more than just collecting a degree. The environment at KCON is inclusive and collaborative, and because of this, it changed my nursing practice. This program was uplifting on so many levels for me personally and professionally.”

– Julie Hubner

**Q: Why did you return to college to complete your Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)?**

**A:** I wanted to expand my nursing practice beyond my job as a surgical nurse. I admired many of the BSN nurses who were nurse leaders and managers. I wanted to be like them, which meant I needed more education. I was also thinking about my long-term career goals.

**Q: What was important to you in an RN to BSN program?**

**A:** Quality of education was paramount as well as a realistic time frame. I am a mom, a wife, and a nurse, so the program had to fit with my work/life balance. I also wanted a program that was accredited since I was making a big investment in my future.

**Q: What are the benefits of in-seat time in Grand Valley's hybrid program?**

**A:** The relationships I established with my professors and classmates have become invaluable. The professors were extremely accessible and very generous with their time. Many of the faculty members have been working nurses like me, so they understand that sometimes life happens. I felt they valued me as an individual and truly wanted me to succeed. I feel very prepared as a BSN nurse thanks to the instruction of the faculty. I established personal and professional bonds that I believe will last a lifetime.

“The RN to BSN program is unique in that all the students are typically working nurses. Some of us had been practicing for years while others had just passed the NCLEX exam. It makes for a unique mix. I learned so much from my fellow students because we all practiced in different areas of nursing which made for great discussions and enhanced my perspective of what it really means to practice as a nurse.”

– Julie Hubner

## About Julie Hubner

Julie Hubner graduated from Grand Valley's RN to BSN program in the spring of 2019 and started in the DNP program in the fall of 2019. She works as a registered nurse in an ambulatory surgery center in West Michigan.

# Faculty research supports the call for professional voice and identity

A clearer understanding of the culture of nursing—by nurses and those outside of the profession—will have a strong impact on those considering joining the profession and the profession in general.



Congratulations to Dr. Susan Strouse for receiving the 2020 University Outstanding Teacher award from GVSU. She is specifically honored for her commitment to excellence and to her students. Her voice is clearly making a difference in their lives and professional practices.

This research from KCON associate professor Susan Strouse, PhD, RN, has been submitted for publication and will be disseminated at the March 2020 Nursing Education Research Conference in Washington, D.C.

The study occurred at three accredited baccalaureate nursing programs in a single midwestern state, and findings have implications for nursing education, healthcare organizations, and the nursing profession. Results reveal the need for a stronger, more intentional process of enculturation for students entering the profession and brings to light the need for health care organizations to build on that enculturation process in order to decrease new nurse culture shock resulting in improved patient outcomes and significant financial and human resource savings.

## What do you want to do with your future?

When you advance your education at Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing, you earn a degree from a highly regarded program offering flexibility, opportunities and exceptional faculty.

- Traditional BSN
- Second Degree BSN
- RN to BSN
- MSN
- DNP
- Certificates

Let's make it happen. Learn more at [www.gvsu.edu/kcon](http://www.gvsu.edu/kcon).



**GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY**  
KIRKHOF COLLEGE  
OF NURSING







The GVSU Family Health Center is an academic nurse-managed center operated by Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing.

[gvsu.edu/fhc](https://gvsu.edu/fhc)

## An inside perspective from Mark Contreras, affiliate clinical faculty

Our nation's healthcare system is not designed for those who are poor, have low health literacy, or struggle with food insecurity. Unfortunately, these disparities have a direct impact on the health and well-being of our community.

It is well-known that the physical presence of healthcare alone is not sufficient to bring about health equity for underserved populations. To truly close the gap, it is essential that emerging trends to revolutionize healthcare be complemented by holistic approaches to identifying and accounting for the social determinants of health.

In addition to offering primary care to faculty, students, and staff of the university, the GVSU Family Health Center (FHC) is a healthcare provider for the medically underserved members of our community. By utilizing a patient-centered care delivery model, the FHC takes an intentional approach to addressing the upstream socioeconomic influences on health. When patients struggle with transportation issues, the high cost of medication, or other limitations within their physical environment, staff at the FHC individualize care to improve health and reduce disparities.

**The FHC's vision for a revitalized approach to delivering primary care not only improves the well-being of patients, it provides an interdisciplinary student experience focused on holistic care.**

This interdisciplinary teamwork has been the foundation for delivering quality care to complex patients at the FHC and creates a setting for students to collaboratively develop practical skills that will enable them to support patients who are navigating the social determinants of health. Healthcare and its recipients do not exist in a vacuum, so preparing future healthcare professionals to work in the dynamic environment that exists for patients beyond the walls of our healthcare facilities is a fundamental part of promoting truly equitable healthcare.



**Students placed at the FHC for clinical education are provided a unique opportunity to use their voice to interact with other students from a variety of disciplines. Nursing, dietetics, and social work are just some of the many disciplines that make up our healthcare team.**

# The GVSU Family Health Center joins Comprehensive Health Initiative Partners

It's not easy to count the number of homeless youth in a community. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, it is believed that there are more than 400 youth, ages 18-24 years old, who live in unsafe/unstable conditions or are homeless. One recent report listed 130 youth who are currently on a waiting list for housing, many needing help in other areas as well, including healthcare.

Five nonprofit organizations, including the GVSU Family Health Center, now are collaborating to provide wrap-around services for homeless youth to disrupt their cycle of homelessness.

“It's a one-stop shop where youth can obtain services in an environment where they feel comfortable. Unlike their previous experiences with healthcare, which likely were in an emergency room, we focus on familiarizing these youth with the idea of primary care and address their fears or uncertainties about navigating the system. We really make a concerted effort, so they get the knowledge they need to take control of their health long term.”

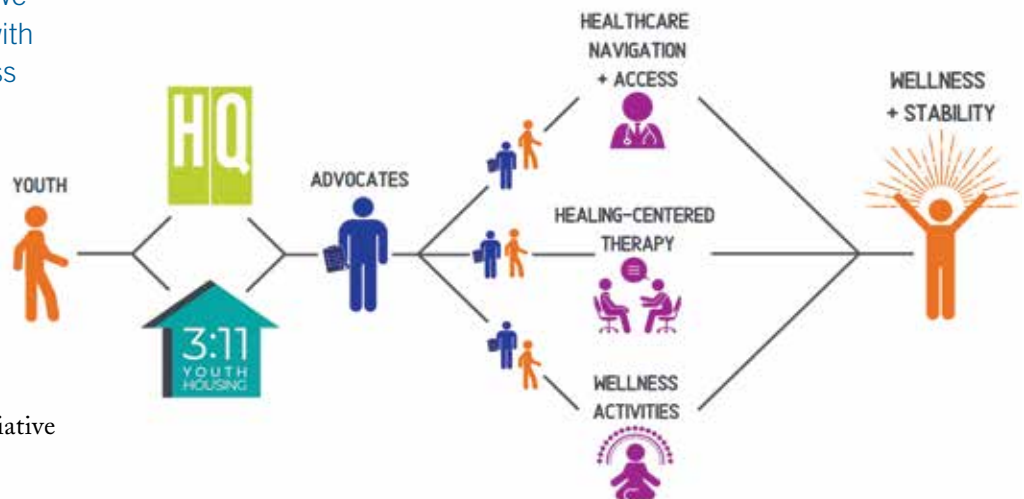
– Mark Contreras

To date, this Comprehensive Health Initiative has received grant funding in excess of \$400,000 from the Steelcase Foundation, Michigan Health Endowment Fund, Herman Miller Cares, Frey Foundation, and Mars Hills Bible Church. The funding supports development and implementation of the model, regulatory policy development, and contracting with a collaborative physician. KCON will support subsequent data analyses and advocacy for systems changes to advance the model as well as organize student clinical experiences.

For more information visit,  
[hqgr.org/comprehensive-health](http://hqgr.org/comprehensive-health)



Mark Contreras, DNP '18, RN, NP-C and Jamie Hendricks, DNP '19, RN, FNP-BC, NRCME, nurse practitioners from the GVSU Family Health Center, provide primary care onsite at HQ using a trauma-informed framework. They also ensure care coordination.



HQ, a drop-in center for teens and young adults who are experiencing unsafe/unstable housing or homelessness, and 3:11 Youth Housing, a provider of safe and affordable housing for local youth, are collaborating with the GVSU Family Health Center, the Wisdom Center, and Health Net of West Michigan to meet the complex physical and mental health needs of this population.



Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) is committed to excellence in education, interprofessional collaboration, and academic practice partnerships. We continue to create free continuing education events that focus on support and resources for healthcare professionals and communities.

For information and to register for upcoming events, visit [gvsu.edu/kcon/edevents](http://gvsu.edu/kcon/edevents).

# Trauma-informed Care & Adverse Childhood Experiences

## May and August 2019



To further our commitment to exploring childhood adversity and trauma-informed care, KCON offered community screenings of the new documentary, *Broken Places*, in May and August. The film was followed by a panel discussion that offered perspective from local experts in foster care, family services, K12 education, higher education, nursing, social work, and psychology. In previous years, KCON featured the related films *Paper Tigers* and *Resilience*.

Our interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts remain strong as we co-design educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in nursing, education, criminal justice, social work, and other related areas. This work is informed by a collaboration of community partners and aligns with the call for greater understanding of the social determinants of health.

In addition, we are hard at work on developing The HUB: Helping to Unite and Build, which is a community institute at Grand Valley established to address trauma-informed care. Our goal is to promote interdisciplinary partnerships across service providers and academia by developing a community institute model that serves as a point of coordination for learning, sharing, and action.



### Broken Places Panel

Left to right: Candace Cowling, Family Futures; Deb Timmerman, Whole Child, Inc.; Susan Carson, GVSU's College of Education; Cynthia McCurren, GVSU's Kirkhof College of Nursing; Kristyn Peck, West Michigan Partnership for Children; Jose Orozco, Kent School Services Network; and Gwenden Dueker, GVSU's Psychology Department





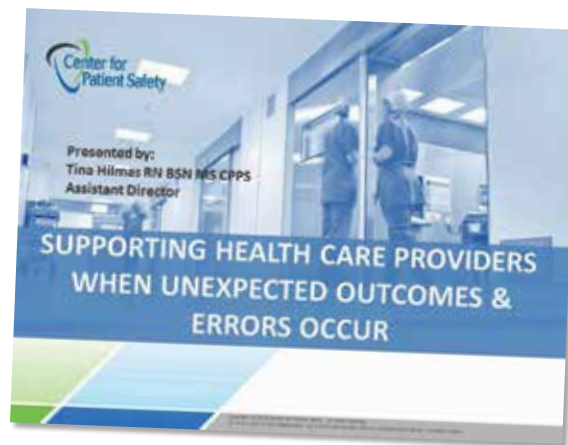
# Safety Science

## September 2019

Because safety science for patients and providers remains a priority for KCON, Tina Hilmas, RN, BSN, MS, CPPS, assistant director with the Center for Patient Safety in Columbia, MO, was invited to present “Supporting Health Care Providers When Unexpected Outcomes and Errors Occur” to more than 150 guests.

In addition, a 14-member interprofessional Safety Science Think Tank gathered to explore barriers to progress in patient and provider safety as well as solutions for the future. Ongoing work entails the comprehensive integration of safety science into our nursing curricula and culture.

These presentations continued the conversation from our 2018 program that featured the film, *To Err Is Human*, followed by an interdisciplinary panel of experts.



### Safety Science Think Tank Members

Back Row, left to right: Gary Roth, Michigan Health & Hospital Association; Matt Biersack, Mercy Health Saint Mary's; Mark Meijer, Life EMS; James Bonner, Spectrum Health; and Kim Byas, Sr. – American Hospital Association

Front Row, left to right: Chris George, Metro Health – University of Michigan Health; Brittany Bogan, Michigan Health & Hospital Association; Sylvia Simons, LeadingAGE Michigan & Grand Valley State University; Cynthia McCurren, Grand Valley State University; Tina Hilmas, Center for Patient Safety; Tom Peterson, Trinity Health; and Mary Kay VanDriel, Spectrum Health

Missing from photo: Claudia Finkelstein, Michigan State University, College of Human Medicine; and Teresa Toland, Tandem365

# Faculty voices

## How have you developed your professional identity as a nurse?

“As nurse and an educator, my identity developed from seeing people in their worst moments and identifying ways to advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves. We are often the voice for the voiceless.”

– Quanza Mooring, PhD, RN, CNE  
Assistant Professor – KCON



“Many people in my family are educators so teaching is ingrained in me. I love to empower people to take charge of their own health. My love of teaching and passion for health promotion and disease prevention led me to become a public health nurse. My segue into being a nursing instructor at GVSU (my alma mater) was a natural progression. It is my hope that I inspire students to be passionate about keeping people at their optimal health and apply what they have learned about community health in any healthcare setting.”

– Kristi Cooper, MSN '02, RN  
Affiliate Faculty – KCON



“Growing up with a nurse (mom) and a police officer (dad), my family values and beliefs included respect and consideration for others and protecting and assisting those in need. This was extended when my brother, sister (RN), and I entered the healthcare and dental fields. Protecting the best interests of the patient while providing optimal care is the ideal. My husband (veteran) and son (police officer) share these family values and beliefs and provide me with encouragement and support. The nursing profession, though rewarding, is an emotional journey. Experience, stamina, and support strengthen my professional identity.”

– Deb Robles, BSN '75, RN  
Part-time Faculty – KCON





# Student voices

## What contributions do nurses make?

“Nurses continually strive to improve the healthcare system. They are innovative in their treatment approaches and push themselves to be effective and efficient in their work. They make leaps and bounds in research efforts and direct patient care to develop better healthcare structures.”

– Emma Merlington  
BSN Student



“The world will never stop needing nurses. I have only completed my first semester in nursing school, but the most important message I have received so far is that the nurse is the patient's greatest advocate. Without nurses supporting their patients the healthcare team could drift away from patient-centered care.”

– Taylor Blackburn  
BSN Student



“Nurses have solved some of our greatest medical mysteries and problems. Because of nurses' displays of empathy and critical thinking skills, nursing can arguably be recognized as one of the most important and honorable professions in the world.”

– Katie Hoppa  
BSN Student



“Nurses are the bridge between medicine and emotion. They use both to make educated decisions and translate care to help the patient gain knowledge and independence. The compassion that nurses show within their career impacts the lives of every patient that they encounter.”

– Rebeca Munoz  
BSN Student



“Nurses remind the world of individuals' humanity. We are present in every country, war zones, schools, and hospitals. We are a shoulder to cry on and our patients' biggest cheerleader. I think each nurse has the ability to change an individual's life with every shift they work.”

– Lucy VanderWoude, BSN '15, RN  
DNP Student, adult/older adult



# Clinical Nurse Leaders improve quality, patient outcomes, and the bottom line

## KCON summit showcased national leadership October 2019

Managing the overall cost of care while improving quality and patient outcomes is challenging in every healthcare setting. Changing care delivery models can be daunting as reimbursement policies evolve and change.

In response to these challenges, Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) held a summit to focus on the role of the Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) to *Coordinate Care: Achieve ROI*. Audience members included medical directors, health care providers, office managers, and other decision makers. A panel of CNLs and a physician rounded out the event with additional examples of CNL contributions to quality outcomes and organizational success.

Organizations leveraging the skills and expertise of the CNL are reported to reach goals for patient outcomes and quality

without sacrificing return on investment. CNLs can make improvements in a wide range of settings including acute, ambulatory, primary, long-term, hospice, and home care.

KCON's Master of Science in Nursing program is designed to provide the clinical leadership skills essential for evidence-based practice and coordination of care delivery processes at the patient-provider interface. MSN graduates are eligible to sit for the CNL certification.

For more information, contact Katherine Moran, associate dean for graduate nursing programs, at 616-331-5458 or [morakath@gvsu.edu](mailto:morakath@gvsu.edu).

### Summit Presentations:



#### **"Mobilizing Excellence: Leveraging the Role of the Clinical Nurse Leader to Realize Transformation in Healthcare"**

Rachel Start, RN, MSN, NE-BC – Director of Ambulatory Nursing, Nursing Practice and Magnet Performance  
Rush Oak Park Hospital, Chicago, IL

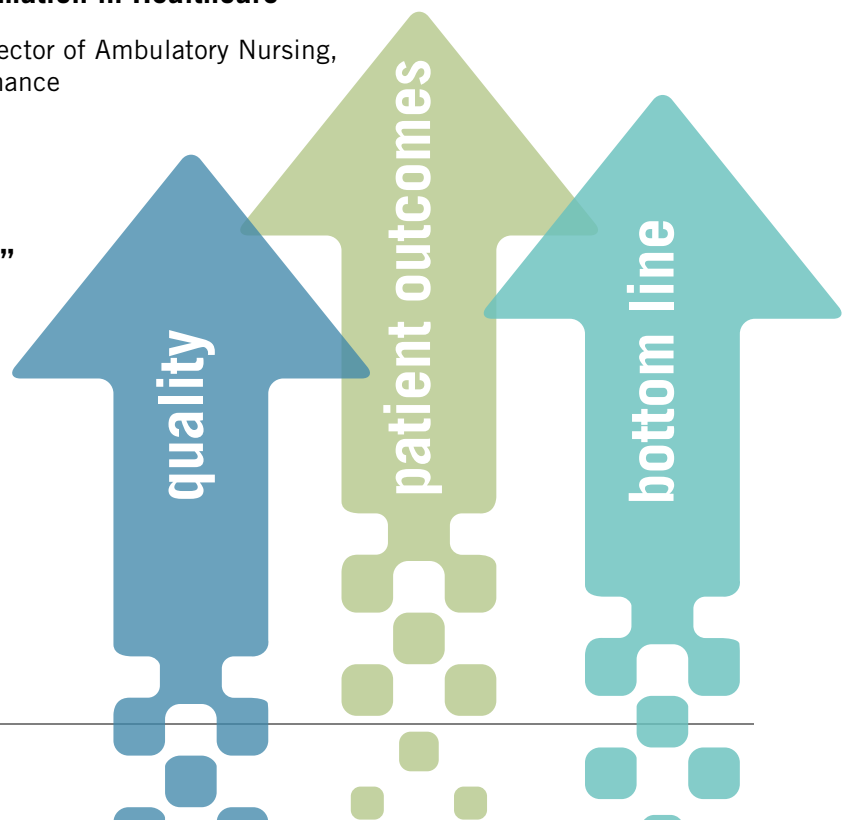


#### **"Moving Across the Microsystem"**

Megan Williams, MSN, RN, CNL  
Complex Care Manager  
Regional One Health, Memphis TN

### Panel Discussion:

Bridget Graham, MSN, RN, CNL  
Daniel Roper, MD  
Kylie Schaberg, MSN '16, RN, CNL  
Michelle Smith, MSN '13, RN, CNL, CRRN







# How many lives can one nurse change?

Since the first nursing class graduated in 1974, we've had 6,380 nurses earn their credentials from Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing. Imagine how many lives we've impacted!

Each of you makes a meaningful difference in our communities and we'd love to welcome you to our Alumni Chapter.

Join us and get quick connections to other alumni, information about our free continuing education programs, and access to our volunteer and giving opportunities. We can extend your network and help you contribute to the success of current Grand Valley nursing students.

Head to [gvsu.edu/alumni/kcon](http://gvsu.edu/alumni/kcon) to let us know where you landed and learn more about our chapter.

## Go Lakers!



Jennifer Langholz, BSN, RN, ACRN ('09)  
President, GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing Alumni Chapter

### Special thanks to our executive committee

Co-vice president: Jennifer Ohman, DNP, AGNP-C, RN ('02, '16)  
Co-vice president: Ruthann Britnall, PhD, APRN-BC-Retired ('83, '97)  
Secretary: Lisa McCann-Spry, MSN, RN, AGCNS-BC, ONC ('00, '10)  
Vice president of fundraising: Julie Johnson, BSN, RN ('15)  
Vice president of membership: Katie Celentino, MS, RN, CMSRN ('11)  
Faculty Advisor: Barbara Hooper DNP, MSN, RN, CHSE, NE-BC ('92, '12)



# Supporters provide opportunities for KCON students

When asked what Grand Valley's Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) means to her, Jean Martin, PhD, RN, CPNP, and retired associate professor of nursing, proudly said KCON is an asset to our community and beyond...at all levels...as a provider, leader, and innovator in healthcare.

**"The best part of teaching is seeing students move on and succeed."**

— Jean Martin

She should know. Teaching at Grand Valley was a significant part of her career. She also was instrumental in establishing KCON's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program.

"KCON nurses are really well-prepared for the workforce," she added. "It's important that we help them."

Jean and Sam Martin are longtime supporters of Grand Valley and say they've enjoyed watching the school grow. Most notably, they started the Jean E. Martin Doctor of Nursing Practice Scholarship. They have also invested in the university's growing Health Campus with gifts to both the Raleigh J. Finkelstein Hall and the Daniel and Pamella DeVos Center for Interprofessional Health.

"The growth process has been deliberate and intentional, thanks to the university leaders' emphasis on quality," Jean Martin said. "GVSU is very competitive with other



institutions of higher education and is what's needed here in the community. There are many reasons to support it."

During his career in manufacturing, Sam Martin worked with students from many GVSU programs.

"They have a unique ability to hit the ground running," he said. "They have learned important life skills that will help them be successful."

We thank the Martins and other donors who so generously support KCON students and programs. For information on the Health Campus expansion and other giving opportunities, visit [www.gvsu.edu/giving/](http://www.gvsu.edu/giving/).

## The Jean E. Martin Doctor of Nursing Practice Scholarship Endowment

"With this scholarship, we hope to remove barriers and maximize time for students to focus on their studies," Jean Martin explained.

The Martins' scholarship assists students pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree who are interested in child and adolescent health issues and have a concentration in Advanced Practice Nursing with Child/Adolescent Specialty.

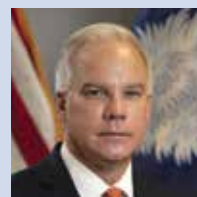
## The Seventh Annual Distinguished Wesorick Lectureship Building Community through Dialogue: Lessons Learned from Charleston, SC

**March 31, 2019 @ 6:00 p.m.**

**GVSU Robert C. Pew Campus – Grand Rapids**

Learn more and register: [gvsu.edu/wesorick](http://gvsu.edu/wesorick)

*The Bonnie Wesorick Center for Health Care Transformation -  
Promoting Interprofessional Collaboration through the Kirkhof College of Nursing*



**Greg Mullen**

Associate Vice President  
for Public Safety and  
Chief of Police at  
Clemson University;  
Former Chief of Police,  
City of Charleston,  
South Carolina



**Rodney C. Robinson**

Senior Financial Analyst,  
Healthier Communities  
Spectrum Health



# WHAT MAKES A NURSE?

Reflecting on an accomplished career in nursing, education, and interprofessional collaboration, Evelyn Clingerman PhD, CNE, RN, FNAP, said she found her voice while growing up on a farm.

“I was younger than 10 when my grandfather’s stroke sent him falling three floors from the top of a barn,” she said. “I became his daytime caregiver, allowing all hands to contribute to the farm labor, especially as we neared harvest.

“Just as we had contributed to the well-being of others, many community farm friends and relatives arrived one sunny fall morning with lines of tractors and farm equipment to harvest our family crops,” she added. “I still remember seeing all that equipment driving into our fields.”

On the farm, Clingerman learned lessons of birth and death, taking care of the land, gratitude, and devotion. She also learned about traditional and nontraditional care from her grandmother who was a midwife.

“Because of my personal development, I was naturally drawn to nursing as a career, but I loved science as well,” she said.

“Imagine my joy when I discovered that a nurse could do scientific work around inherited values.”

– Evelyn Clingerman



Clingerman’s father kept copious notes about the fields, seeds, soil, weather, water measurements, and fertilizers. This inspired her to want to know more about experimental design and control groups, which led to her curiosity about how people are impacted by their environment.

“My professional identity became how I saw myself within nursing,” Clingerman said. “All the values I had as a child came together. I was fortunate to have professional experiences in mental health, intensive and burn/trauma care, hospice care, school nursing, and community care.



“These positions and settings allowed me to become a part of the lives of numerous patients, families and communities. This created the vibrant whole of my nursing identity,” she said. “All of the experiences added to my professional identity in terms of compassion, competence, commitment, determination, and confidence.”



## About Evelyn Clingerman

Clingerman has spent her wide-ranging nursing career in a variety of settings, from a surgical/trauma intensive care unit to university classrooms. Her research and publications have centered on holistic and transcultural nursing, and Clingerman is a long-time advocate for migrant health, which she advanced through publications, presentations, and health outreach services. She is the first executive director of GVSU’s Bonnie Wesorick Center for Health Care Transformation and has served faculty, students, practice partners, and the community in this role since 2012. She celebrated her retirement in December 2019 and looks forward to remaining involved.

## FACULTY PROMOTIONS



**Kelli Damstra, DNP '12, MSN, RN**  
Associate Professor, Tenured

In 2019, Damstra was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned a BSN degree from the University of Michigan, a MSN degree from the

University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and a DNP degree from Grand Valley State University.

Her scholarship is focused on improving maternal and infant health in the community setting, specifically through breastfeeding promotion, education, and support. She collaborated with the Kent County Health Department on research through the Moms Helping Moms Breastfeed Project. Damstra teaches maternal/child health.

Damstra currently serves on KCON's Scholarship and Evaluation Committee and Holistic Admissions Task Force as well as GVSU's Campus Life Committee. She is a member of the Healthy Kent Breastfeeding Coalition and serves on the board of directors at Keystone Community Church.

"Ever since my first job as a registered nurse in labor and delivery, teaching has been my favorite part of being a nurse. The professional role in which I serve is ideal in my opinion, because it combines the areas of teaching and nursing. I have a passion for engaging in collaborative partnerships with students, faculty, community members, and organizational representatives from the healthcare field in order to improve health outcomes for patients and their families. Ultimately, I find joy in my students, and find it a privilege to be a part of the educational journey of our future nurse leaders."



**Barbara Hooper, DNP '12, MSN '92, RN, CHSE, NE-BC**  
Associate Professor, Tenured

In 2019, Hooper was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned a BSN from Nazareth College and

MSN and DNP degrees from Grand Valley State University. She is a Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator®.

Her scholarship and research are focused on simulation, critical thinking skills, and holistic admissions in nursing programs. She teaches simulation and nursing leadership theory in the undergraduate program.

Hooper currently serves on GVSU's University Academic Senate and University Library Advisory Committee as well as KCON's Holistic Admissions Task Force and Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee. She is the Faculty Advisor for the Kirkhof College of Nursing Alumni Chapter, a trustee on the Hudsonville Public Schools Board of Education, and chair of the Ottawa County Community Action Agency Advisory Board.

"Teaching allows me to share my passion for nursing. I find joy working one-on-one with students and mentoring them in regards to their next steps after they graduate from KCON. At the end of the day, it's really about making a difference and striving for excellence in all that you do."



**Susan Strouse, PhD, RN**  
Associate Professor, Tenured

In 2019, Strouse was promoted to associate professor with tenure. She earned an ADN from Lansing Community College, a BSN degree from Michigan State University, a

MSN Nursing Education degree from Saginaw Valley State University, and a Post-Masters Certificate in Transcultural Nursing and a PhD from Duquesne University.

Her scholarship and research are focused on the culture of nursing and nursing education as well as the scholarship of teaching and learning. She teaches courses in the RN to BSN program as well as evidence-based practice and nursing research at undergraduate and master's levels.

Strouse currently serves on KCON's Faculty Affairs Committee and Deans for Wellness Committee, GVSU's IRB and IRB Policy and Procedure Committee, and the advisory board to the Muskegon Community College Nursing Program. She is a peer reviewer for Nursing Education in Practice and a faculty counselor for the Kappa Epsilon at large chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society.

"Nursing is more than a skill set or what we do. It is who we are and how we interact with others. My passion is helping to transform lives—of my patients, students and colleagues. Nursing education allows me to share that passion with many people who can then help transform the lives of others. Nursing has a sacred trust with the public, and that trust is based on our multiple roles—caregiver, advocate, educator, and other roles. We must uphold that trust by our interactions with others and promotion of our profession."

Visit [gvsu.edu/kcon/achievements](https://gvsu.edu/kcon/achievements) for additional research, scholarship and grant information.



## PERSONNEL UPDATES

### New Faculty



**Rachel Bishop, MSN, RN**  
Affiliate Faculty



**Quanza Mooring, PhD, RN**  
Assistant Professor,  
Tenure Track Faculty



**David Vander Ark, MSN, RN**  
Visiting Faculty



**Lola Coke, PhD, RN**  
Associate Professor,  
Tenured Faculty



**Christina Quick, DNP, APRN, CPNP-AC/PC**  
Assistant Professor,  
Tenure Track Faculty



**Ashley Woldman, MSN, RN**  
Affiliate Faculty



**Sherri Fannon, DNP, RN**  
Assistant Professor,  
Tenure Track Faculty

### New Staff



**Janice Aussicker**  
Academic Department  
Coordinator – Graduate  
Programs



**Kayla Innis, MPH, BSN, RN**  
ANEW Grant Project  
Manager



**Mackenzie Prins, MEd, BS**  
Academic Advisor



**Lauren Homolka, BBA**  
Academic Department  
Coordinator –  
Undergraduate  
Programs



**Lori Lynn, BSN, RN**  
ANEW Grant Project  
Coordinator

### New Administrative Appointments



**Rebecca Davis**  
Associate Dean  
for Research and  
Scholarship



**Norine Cunningham, MSN, RN**  
Affiliate Faculty



**Evelyn Clingerman, PhD, CNE, RN, FNAP**  
Transitioned from  
Executive Director of  
Wesorick Center to  
special projects

### Retirements

## EXTERNAL GRANTS

AWARDED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2018 AND NOVEMBER 2019.  
TOTALS INCLUDE LIFETIME AWARD.

#### Katherine Moran

- Advanced Nursing Education Workforce Grant
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- \$2,799,987

#### Janet Winter

- Fuld Endowment Financial Aid for Accelerated BSN Program (see scholarships)
- Helene Fuld Health Trust
- \$600,000

#### Cynthia McCurren & Janet Winter

- 2019 Nurse Professional Fund Grant to Approved Nursing Education Programs
- State of Michigan Dept. of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
- \$12,121

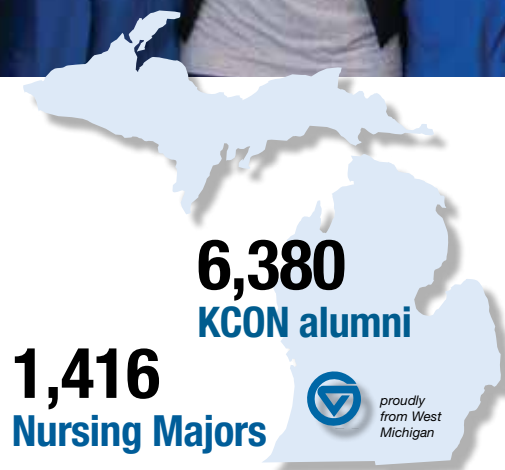
#### Sandra Spoelstra

- MI-Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders – 2020
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- \$101,734.77



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