

MIZZOUNURSING2

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SINCLAIR SCHOOL OF NURSING | SPRING 2021 2022



NURSES PULL TOGETHER
Road to RECOVERY

2021



FROM THE DEAN

What a year we have experienced. I am sure we will be reflecting on this past year for many years to come. As a society, a profession, and a school, we have endured a great deal. I could not be more proud of nursing as a profession and of our faculty, students, and staff. As nurses worldwide, we have stepped up to address a humanitarian crisis responding with courage and compassion. The Sinclair School of Nursing's (SSON) faculty responded similarly by working tirelessly to pivot online and by helping students continue to gain the learning, understanding, and skills necessary to become strong nurses. Faculty coped with many uncertainties as each semester brought new guidelines regarding who could be on campus, how many clinical hours students could gain in the acute setting, and how to interact personally while maintaining safety. Our students endured many uncertainties, too – new learning formats and social isolation at a time that friends and social support are pivotal to their well-being. Our staff assumed extra duties to ensure the school's operations

continued as usual. And all of us learned what Zoom fatigue really means.

In this issue of Mizzou Nursing, we present stories that highlight how MU Health Care's nursing leaders were central to their planning, response, and success at battling COVID and how two of the SSON's research teams joined to combat COVID in Missouri's nursing homes. There are two stories of how faculty at Sinclair responded to the need to grow resilience and lessen stress. And finally, we hope you enjoy reading about this year's outstanding alumni award winners.

As we emerge from COVID and enter a new normal, we are humbled by what we have learned. I hope you enjoy this issue of Mizzou Nursing.

Sarah Thompson

Dean Sarah Thompson



04 A Village, A Vision, A Very Impactful Journey

Vivien Jepkemoi follows her dream of becoming a physician with the support of a global community.
Written by Gordy Saur



2021

This generation will forever be known as the generation that won the war against Covid19. Nurses and the entire healthcare system will be known as the heroes that saved the world.



07 Caring for Our Own

Sinclair School of Nursing responds to Covid-19 stress with resilience.
Written by Jack Wax

09 Education Prepares Nurses to Lead During Crisis

MU Health Care shows they are first in line to Covid response.
Written by Joe Walljasper



13 Sinclair's Second Responders

Two MU Sinclair School of Nursing programs bring critical expertise to Missouri nursing homes during the global pandemic.
Written by Kelsey Allen

07

19 Student Highlight Charlie Bellew

Written by Casey Wendleton



20 Student Highlight Emily Cantrell

Written by Casey Wendleton



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK! ✉

Please send feedback about this issue, or to submit suggestions for future articles in Mizzou Nursing. You can write to us at nursing@missouri.edu or send mail to: Sinclair School of Nursing - Marketing 327 Math Science Building, Columbia, MO 65211

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Eva Quin
Students have shown incredible resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.



From the Nursing Alumni Organization

Fellow Nursing Alums and Friends of the Sinclair School of Nursing,


Hope springs eternal
- It is human nature always to find fresh cause for optimism.
-Oxford Languages and Google

While we may credit human nature, it certainly seems like there are many “causes” for optimism this spring. Spring is my favorite time to be on campus. The place seems to come alive; greening grass, blooming flowers, trees sprouting leaves, and Tigers on the prowl. The fresh Columbia, MO spring air is a mixed blend of the stress of finals and the enthusiasm of upcoming graduation. I love it, all of it! We missed these joys of spring last year, which means the hope and optimism for 2021 has built up doubly. If you can, I encourage you to make a trip to campus and just go for a walk – take it all in.

After a stroll around the quad and a lap on the track at Stankowski Field, of course you will want to check out the progress on the new Sinclair School of Nursing building. This School of Nursing is a part of your history, you are a part of the school’s history. I encourage you to stay in touch with it, with all of us.

As the construction of the new building progresses, the Nursing Alumni Organization has initiated a project – Charting Mizzou’s Nurses: Year 1 to Year 120+. Our goal is simple but audacious – to honor every individual Mizzou Nursing graduate through a series of biographical profiles. We will include class photos and historic documentation in an interactive database to be accessible to campus visitors and students. I ask you to join us in bringing this project to life. We need your stories, photos, memories, knowledge, and generosity. We are working to make contact with every Mizzou Nurse through class representatives. Please share what you have and give what you can; this is a unique opportunity. The Sinclair School of Nursing is part of your history, you are a part of this school’s history. Let’s stay in touch and honor every graduate.

Here’s a health to thee.

M-I-Z, 

Julie Miller, BSN’91, MS(N)’13, DNP’17
President, Nursing Alumni Organization



History Speaks!

SHARE YOUR NURSING HISTORY WITH US

If you are a graduate that has photos of your time with the Sinclair School of Nursing, please send them to our Marketing and Communications Director, Casey Wendleton (wendletonc@missouri.edu). We would love to hear from you and preserve the past through visual memories of our alumni. Please be sure to send descriptions with your photos, if possible.



“This year has been exceptionally challenging in the health care field. But I’m proud of the care we’re able to provide as mid-Missouri’s premiere health system. I went into nursing to help people. There’s no better time and place to do that than right now. Our nurses are dedicated to providing the very best care. As the community relies on MU Health Care, we need more nurses to help meet their needs.”

- Megan Cram
Sinclair School of Nursing Alumna
MU Health Care RN

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A Village, A Vision

A Very Impactful Journey

Vivien Jepkemoi follows her dream of becoming a physician with the support of a global community.

Written by Gordy Sauer
Photos provided by Jepkemoi family.

In October 2020, during one of Vivien Jepkemoi’s clinical practicum sessions at an intensive care unit, a patient arrived in a grave state. He was suffering from multiple seizures, and he couldn’t breathe. The attending physicians and nurses at MU Health Care needed to perform an emergency bedside intubation to open his airway. As a graduating senior in the Sinclair School of Nursing and student research assistant, Vivien helped where she could. Moments like these are the reasons she wants to become a doctor — to save patients’ lives. And as the team worked diligently, she knew the patient had a good chance to live because he did have access to quality health care. This access was a benefit Vivien had watched too many from her rural African village go without.

“We only had one physician who always came like once a month to the clinic,” Vivien said, who grew

up in Kapkenda, Kenya, 8,000 miles away. Kapkenda, she explained, is nearly three hours from the nearest hospital in Eldoret, Kenya. “So having that problem in my community I was like, you know, I would like to grow up and try and fill that gap in the health care system where people don’t have to travel so far away. Because if you had like, say, someone who had an asthma attack or even a pregnant woman trying to deliver and there’s no physician, there’s no ambulance, there’s nothing — then you could lose a lot of lives.”

Vivien had been in that helpless position over a decade before. Her aunt, an epileptic, lost her battle with that illness in 2008. Her grandmother, asthmatic, died only a year later. Both of these women raised her alongside her mother, who she calls “my most important support system, my role model and my best friend.” But with her mother’s teaching job keeping her away from



Vivien, age four, with her grandmother, Kimoi Barmao (left), and mother, Caroline (right), in Kapkenda.

Vivien with her mother, Caroline, during Vivien’s visit to Kenya, summer 2019.

Kapkenda for months at a time, her grandmother was her primary caregiver, making sure Vivien had food and books. And it was her grandmother’s death that proved so formative.

“Instead of using [my grandmother’s] passing away as a stumbling block,” Vivien said, “I decided I can use it to make sure that, you know, one other person or two other people can be able to enjoy that time with their grandparents one day, one time, by focusing on building my career towards being a physician and saving a life.”

While her eventual journey to the University of Missouri was still being shaped, she was well on her way to realizing her medical dream. A standout student, Vivien earned a spot in one of the top boarding schools and the first institution of higher secondary education for African girls in Kenya: the Alliance Girls High School in Nairobi. She graduated in 2014 and spent some time mentoring and empowering young Kenyan girls through the non-profit Shoe4Africa, advocating for HIV/AIDS awareness and teaching them how to earn money through farming and gardening.

During those intervening years, she continued to apply to U.S. colleges, but she struggled attaining the academic scholarships she needed. “So I had to start running track after high school,” said Vivien. “Having to start something I never did like the first 18 years of my life... I feel it was a big challenge. But I didn’t let it hold me back.”

On a recruiting trip to Kenya in 2016, Mizzou head cross country coach Marc Burns and head track and field coach Brett Halter introduced Vivien to the University of Missouri and the possibility of an athletic scholarship. By then, she had only been running track for about two years — an uncertain prospect for any coach or prospective student-athlete. No one, however, was deterred.

“We could see right away that Vivien was destined for success at this level,” Burns said. “She showed a determination that you just do not see in everyone.”

Vivien understands her journey to medicine is much bigger than herself. “This is the time when they need me the most.”

In the fall of 2017, Vivien arrived at Mizzou on a track and field scholarship. She was drawn to Mizzou’s history of groundbreaking research and academic achievement, as well as its global alumni network that goes above and beyond to provide critical resources and opportunities for current students. And that first impression with Coach Burns and Coach Halter went a long way.

“They were also really friendly, and that kind of gave me a sense of the community I was going to join,” Vivien said. This shared commitment to community has made Vivien feel at home in mid-Missouri. It’s also enabled her to excel, even when new challenges arose. In 2019, she had to leave the track and field team to focus on her nursing education, which also meant giving up her athletic scholarship. To fill that gap, in stepped Missouri 100 (MO 100). MO 100 is a group of accomplished leaders that advises and supports the President in promoting the critical role of the University of Missouri System in our state’s future and its reputation around the world.

Others, such as the International Center, as well as many faculty and staff stepped in, too, including: Sinclair School of Nursing Dean Sarah Thompson; Dr. Karen Edison, Dr. Laine Young-Walker and Dr. Laura Henderson Kelley in the School of Medicine; and Associate Professor R. Scott Rector in the Nutrition & Exercise Physiology Department. ▼



Vivien honoring her graduation 2019.

They helped support Vivien’s education, opened doors for experiential learning opportunities such as her student research assistant position, and advocated for her every step of the way. “It was kind of like almost everyone involved in the situation,” Vivien said of her financial transition away from Mizzou Athletics. “But if it were not for MO 100, probably I wouldn’t have graduated from Mizzou. Because as an international student, you pay a lot of out-of-state tuition. So I’m really grateful, and they’ve made a life-changing difference in my life and the life of my family.”

On Friday, December 18, 2020, Vivien went through another transition — this time from Mizzou student to Mizzou alumna, graduating with honors. The Sinclair School of Nursing awarded her the Geriatric Excellence Award, a faculty-nominated honor given to a student demonstrating sensitivity to older adults’ needs and an ability to provide high-quality nursing care. On top of these accomplishments, she is the first person from her village to ever come to the U.S., and the first to graduate from a U.S. university.

It would be easy to say that overcoming adversity is second nature to Vivien Jepkemoi. But it’s more accurate to say that, for Vivien, adversity is an essential part of the journey. Through adversity, you grow. Through adversity, you recognize outstanding problems like inequitable access to health care, and you become part of the solution.

So much of her success is rooted in her ability to align the past, present and future around this core philosophy. Vivien chose to pursue nursing because it will give her the financial stability to support her 8-year-old sister back in Kenya and help her finish her medical school pre-requisites. It will also allow her to earn her green card so that she can, hopefully, enroll in the MU School of Medicine in the near future.

“You look at the target,” Vivien said. “It’s like, one person told me a story about when you go for hunting.



Vivien’s family and village waiting for her arrival at Eldoret International Airport in Kenya, summer 2019.

So maybe your target is like a gazelle. You see, like, you know, small animals — like a rabbit or something. But you’re focused on the gazelle. So, I didn’t let the small benefits or the small obstacles stop me from coming to the U.S. I just kept moving forward.” An understatement. Even now, when faced with the extraordinary public health challenge of COVID-19, Vivien understands her journey to medicine is much bigger than herself. “This is the time when they need me the most,” she said without hesitation.

Vivien has already helped save a life. That patient at MU Health Care who couldn’t breathe survived. She, the doctors and the nurses worked together to transform his future and the future of everyone who loves and relies on him. And while Vivien’s on-going story will likely be one that includes many lives saved at her hands, it has taken a village to make that story possible. ■

Caring for Our Own

Sinclair School of Nursing Responds to Covid-19 Stress with Resilience



Written by Jack Wax

In pre-pandemic 2020, no one could have predicted that social isolation, incessant anxiety and sky-high levels of stress and depression would become the new normal of college life. But what could have been expected is that students and faculty of the Sinclair School of Nursing would meet the mental health challenges of life under a pandemic together.

The challenges were myriad and still persist. Early in the pandemic, daily life at Sinclair was shattered. Classrooms and administrative offices were vacated in mid-March 2020, forcing students and faculty to migrate online. As virtual classes replaced in-person instruction, the sense of community and support that depends on casual interactions and

being physically in each other’s presence crumbled. Opportunities for clinical training in hospitals dwindled or disappeared for undergraduates, while graduate students scrambled to find preceptors in their clinical settings.

By the time summer session began, the lockdown eased a bit as limited clinical experiences became available. And by fall, hybrid classes were introduced, after the protocols for mitigating the risk of contagion had been thoroughly tested throughout the world. Clinicals – both in-person and simulations – also resumed as the fall semester started.

If the question is *What does it take to weather out a pandemic?* the Sinclair community has answered with

resiliency. Students are learning a new level of self-awareness and self-care, and faculty are practicing a new level of flexibility. Dean Sarah Thompson, PhD, RN, FAAN, has placed resiliency at the core of the school’s response and students’ lives by launching a new course that teaches healthy coping mechanisms. Graduate students stepped up to the challenges by leading wellness groups for undergraduates. Professors became more accommodating of assignment deadlines. And students found ways to follow safety protocols that kept each other safe and healthy. “Preparing nurses and nursing students to manage stress and to be their best selves is as critical to the individual as it is to the profession,” says ▼

Sinclair School of Nursing BY THE NUMBERS



Dean Thompson. "It's an area I'm passionate about." In addition to her administrative responsibilities, the Dean teaches the resiliency course and has led stress-reducing yoga sessions for faculty and students via Zoom. Originally, the resiliency course was designed by a former faculty member to head off burnout in the workplace and to reduce the incidence of depression among practicing nurses. "When the pandemic hit, it was a perfect time to introduce it," says Dean Thompson.

There's a world of difference between resilience and mere positive thinking. Resilience means being able to cope with adversity and to recover from it. "Resilience does not mean that you get rid of, or cover up, uncomfortable feelings. Resilience is a choice in how you respond to situations and depends on making that choice mindfully," says Dean Thompson.

In the resiliency course, which is now required for all fifth-semester students, the focus is on learning self-awareness skills and techniques to reduce the effects of negative emotions and to experience more positive feelings. Class exercises include practicing breathing techniques, learning to differentiate depleting emotions from renewing ones; practicing kindness, gratitude and mindfulness; and journaling. In addition, students learn how their emotions, their spiritual values and their relationships impact their life. "It's rewarding to see students have this big 'Aha' moment when they realize they are learning about themselves," says Dean Thompson.

Lessons learned in the resiliency class impact students' lives throughout the week. "It's like a reminder that there is always time for self-care. I've realized that without stability and consistency,

there's nothing," says Nikole Gilman, a fifth-semester nursing student.

The groundwork for the School's response was laid long before Covid-19 began disrupting everyday life in Mid-Missouri. Ongoing communications, trust and mutual respect among faculty, administrators and students were critical elements of Sinclair's pre-pandemic environment. Katie Montross, a seventh-semester nursing student and former student nursing association president, values the School's culture as much as its course content. "The faculty have always been receptive and warm, and students understand that they want to talk with us -- to be there for us," she says.

"Resilience does not mean that you get rid of, or cover up, uncomfortable feelings. Resilience is a choice in how you respond to situations and depends on making that choice mindfully,"

Because of that trust, Montross felt comfortable early in the pandemic sharing her concerns with Sinclair administrators and her instructors about the stresses she and other students were feeling. "Pre-pandemic, when everything was normal, we'd have in-person meetings, pancake breakfasts, study groups -- we'd get together all the time," says Montross. "Now we can't study together in groups. We have to stay six feet apart, wear a mask and do everything over Zoom."

The dialog among students and faculty led to a more formal evaluation of student stresses and mental health needs. Montross and her fellow students surveyed their peers around the same time faculty conducted their routine student satisfaction survey. The results were anything but routine. The surveys confirmed that Sinclair students faced the same mental health issues that college students throughout the nation were struggling with.

Sinclair faculty recognized and reacted to the signs of distress their students exhibited in Zoom classes. "It makes it so difficult for them to follow assignments, keep their calendars straight and complete their work in a timely manner," says instructor Mary Fete, MS(N), RN. "I have never seen students as stressed as they have been during COVID, and it breaks my heart so see them go through this experience. It's a situation that calls for faculty support and genuine caring, now more than ever."

National studies paint a distressing picture of the pandemic's effects on young adults. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study, three out of four Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 are experiencing poor mental health tied to the pandemic. Researchers reported in PLOS ONE that 85 percent of surveyed college students had experienced high to moderate levels of emotional distress. And the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report published the sobering finding that 25 percent of 18-24-year-old Americans had seriously considered suicide in a 30-day period.

Nursing students may be particularly susceptible to the harmful consequences of social isolation. "Most nursing students are very empathetic," says Nancy Birtley, DNP, APRN, PMHCNS-BC.

(Continued on page 12) ▼



Mary Beck, DNP, RN, is the co-leader of MU Health Care's COVID-19 incident command. Beginning in March 2020, she led the effort to prepare the health system for the challenges presented by the coronavirus.

Education Prepares Nurses to Lead During Crisis

MU SSON graduates play key roles in MU Health Care's pandemic response

Written by Joe Walljasper
Photographer Justin Kelley

For nurses at MU Health Care, March 2020 is the dividing line between what their jobs were and what their jobs are. That's when COVID-19 altered duties, upended protocols and made an already demanding profession even tougher.

"I've been a nurse 44 years, and this has been the most challenging situation I've experienced in my career," said Mary Beck, DNP, RN, the chief nursing officer at MU Health Care.

There was no way to anticipate every challenge the coronavirus created, but the Sinclair School of Nursing helped instill in its graduates the creativity, compassion and resilience needed to safely care for Missourians in a crisis. Sinclair graduates have played key roles in MU Health Care's pandemic response, from administrative planning to testing to direct patient care. Here are the stories of four of those nurses.

Incident commander

On March 12, 2020, MU Health Care established a COVID-19 incident command. Beck and chief medical officer Stevan Whitt, MD, were selected as co-incident commanders.

They faced a challenge of staggering complexity. The task required essentially setting up a hospital within a hospital by establishing isolated areas to test, admit and care for COVID patients while still providing necessary health care to uninfected patients. They had to make these plans in an environment in which little was known about how the virus was transmitted, how hard it would strike Missouri or whether the health system's supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) would be restocked regularly.

And they needed to get the job done in a hurry. The incident command team, which also included section chiefs in charge of specific areas, initially met twice a day, at 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. It quickly transformed MU Health Care from a traditional academic health system to one capable of handling an infectious disease pandemic.

"The first month was really intense, creating our COVID response plan, using the framework we ▼



Dr. Mary Beck

already had with our pandemic plan but constantly adding details," Beck said. "As incident commander, I or Dr. Whitt led every meeting. The section chiefs would bring information in that they had been working on the last eight hours, like, 'How are we going to manage distribution of personal protective equipment during this pandemic with supply chain disruption?' We would discuss and make decisions."

Beck and the incident command team used a tiered response system that dictated policies based on the total number of COVID-positive cases and inpatients. At first, elective surgeries and procedures were postponed to free up beds and preserve PPE for a potential surge of COVID cases. Almost overnight, doctors who had never used telehealth were treating all their patients through the Zoom video-conferencing platform.

The next challenge was creating a safe path for a return to elective surgeries and procedures, with new safety measures like plexiglass and distanced chairs in waiting rooms. Beck said she has been inspired by the resilience of the employees she leads.

"What's most rewarding to me is the way the staff of MU Health Care pulled together and said, 'We're going to do our very best work and continue to provide excellent care to all who seek to come here,' even when they're being challenged on a personal level," Beck said. "We've problem-solved together and supported each other."

Going mobile

Beginning in March 2020, Jeanette Linebaugh, MSN, RN, was not just MU Health Care's senior director of nursing for ambulatory care services, she was also the manager of the drive-thru testing site located next to the MU softball stadium.



Jeanette Linebaugh

Without much to go on regarding staffing, workflow, patient volume or how to set up the necessary IT equipment in a parking lot, Linebaugh led the team that created the testing site from scratch. It took just two days.

"In nursing school, we were taught to think through workflows and what they looked like from a patient perspective and from a staff perspective," Linebaugh said. "I drew on my abilities to critically think and be innovative on how to serve the community."

For the first six weeks, Linebaugh was on location

every day. A revolving cast of 10 to 12 medical assistants, patient service representatives, nurses and many other health care professionals worked at the site each day. After a few months, they grew close and even began appreciating the charms of their new home, which consisted of an emergency trailer and an expanse of asphalt. Because of increased patient volume — as many as 700 people were tested in one day — MU Health Care opened a second drive-thru testing location just north of Business Loop 70 over the summer and eventually moved all of the testing there on July 20.

"It was an emotional, kind of sad day the last Saturday we were open," she said of the original site. "That was a home away from home for many of the staff."

Regardless of the location, Linebaugh continues to manage the staff, who don't let heat, cold, wind or rain stop them from doing their job. She has marveled at the response of the community, which has donated countless meals and snacks to her workers, and from the workers themselves.



Jeanette Linebaugh, MSN, RN, manages MU Health Care's COVID-19 drive-thru testing site. She led the team that created a mobile testing facility in just two days.

"COVID is scary to people, so they were thankful we were out there in the elements taking care of them," Linebaugh said. "Also, from the staff that was working there, so many said, 'I love doing this for our patients and the community.'"

When the COVID-19 vaccines became available and MU Health Care became mid-Missouri's biggest vaccination provider, Linebaugh again took a leadership role. She helped organize the high-throughput vaccine site at Faurot Field that was able to give thousands of shots per day to the public.

"Serving the community during the pandemic has been one of the most humbling experiences in my

nursing career," Linebaugh said. "When members of the community enter the doors of the Columns Club at Faurot Field, I see hope in their eyes — hope for a better tomorrow, a tomorrow where they can see their grandchildren, friends and loved ones without fear of getting sick."

Together at a distance

By design, MU Health Care's psychiatric patients are brought together frequently. They eat together, go to group therapy sessions and interact with each other in the evening over card games and board games.

So when the COVID threat reached Missouri, Debra Deeken, DNP, RN, the executive director of clinical operations and director of nursing for the Missouri Psychiatric Center, knew she and her fellow department leaders would have to change familiar ways. They began writing the necessary changes down, and it grew into a document that is "many pages long" and still growing as MU Health Care's infection control team and the Centers for Disease Control learn more about the virus.



Dr. Debra Deeken

"We looked at every single process we had and had to think through ways to mitigate infection risks in everything we do," Deeken said. "For example, we had to pull chairs out of our unit so our patients could be six feet apart where they eat and where they sit in the TV lounge. We had to put practices into place where we cleaned every single horizontal space on the unit, including doorknobs and push plates for doors, every hour. Our staff continues to do that. There was an incredible amount of effort put into place — and they're still in place — to keep our patients and staff safe from COVID."

Deeken gained a new appreciation for the importance of over-communicating with her nurses and staff, not just about all the changing procedures they needed to follow, but also about their personal stress and struggles.

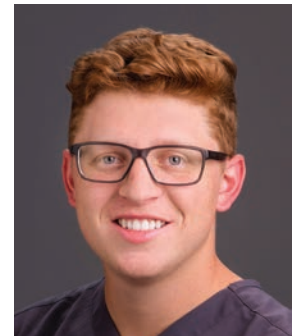
"From both a clinical and leadership perspective, my education at the School of Nursing was the foundation for being able to navigate these extremely stressful times," Deeken said. "My clinical knowledge and leadership education help me work through processes, pull people together, initiate change and follow through on that change. I'm very grateful for

the skills I learned in order to function and lead in a time of crisis."

Compassion in the MICU

TJ Headley, RN, has worked in University Hospital's Medical Intensive Care Unit since graduating from the School of Nursing in 2018.

He's used to serving the sickest patients, but the job has a new twist during the pandemic — connecting patients with the loved ones who can't visit them.



TJ Headley

"That's hard on the patient and hard on the family members," Headley said.

"We've done our best to make sure they can see their loved one, even if it's through Zoom on an iPad, and to see we're caring for them and doing everything we can. Some nurses will take care of a patient for two or three weeks in a row. They're sick for a very long time, and family members call every night and we kind of get to know them."

MICU nurses take turns working shifts in the COVID unit, whose patients are separated from the other patients on the floor.

"When you're there, it takes a lot of teamwork from a small group of nurses, because the nurses working with the non-COVID patients won't necessarily have a chance to come over and help," Headley said. "The COVID patients can get very sick very quickly, so it's definitely a great challenge. I've always come away from those shifts very tired but very grateful for the team we have."

One of Headley's most rewarding nursing experiences came early in the pandemic. He was working in the COVID unit and admitted a new patient. They got to know each other, and Headley did his best to calm the man's nerves.

"The next night I came back to work, and he was already on the ventilator," Headley said. "That was tough. But within a couple weeks, he got off the ventilator, actually went out of the ICU and got to go home. A family member came back and had handwritten thank you cards for everyone that had taken care of him. That is probably the most rewarding thing, getting to see patients be at their very worst and then come out of it and get to go home, back to their families." ■

"They're sensitive to other people's emotions; and that could certainly contribute to increased negative effects of the pandemic. Plus, with undergraduates, you're dealing with people who are also in a vulnerable part of their lives, trying to transition from being with their parents to now suddenly being expected to be independent," she says. Dr. Birtley teaches psychiatric nursing to graduate students at Sinclair as well as owning a private practice that provides psychiatric services to long-term care residents.

Because the Sinclair graduate program is conducted entirely online, those students had a different set of challenges than undergraduates. In addition to dealing with the general stress everyone else was experiencing, plus possible exposure to Covid in the workplace, they "were

struggling to find clinical sites where they could complete their course requirements," says Dr. Birtley.

This lack of opportunity became the impetus for a new resource for Sinclair students. "With graduate students needing to find a clinical setting and undergraduates needing support and wellness-coping skills, I started Undergraduate Wellness and Support groups, with my graduate students serving as group leaders," she says. Any Sinclair student can sign up to attend one of the group sessions where they can discuss in a supportive environment their here-and-now problems brought on by the pandemic.

Montross and several of her friends are taking part in the support groups, continuing their clinicals, social distancing and making the

best of a difficult time. She looks forward to graduating on schedule and hopes one day to work on a labor and delivery floor. Although the pandemic has robbed her of a normal college experience, it showed her the value of a caring college community. "The faculty have remained strong, positive and supportive," she says. "Their number one goal has been to make us the best nurses we can be."

Coping with pandemic stress hasn't deterred Montross or other future nurses from entering the profession. In fact, they feel more empowered by their choice of profession. "I've heard the same things from our students as I've been reading about at the national level," says Dean Thompson. "Although no one enjoys the situation we are all in right now, students are more determined and excited to become nurses than ever." ■

Sinclair's Second Responders

Two School of Nursing programs bring critical expertise to Missouri nursing homes during the global pandemic.

Written by Kelsey Allen

When Marilyn Rantz hung up the phone, she knew she had to do something. A director of nursing at a long-term care facility in St. Louis had just told Rantz that she was making masks out of rubber bands and paper towels. "That rocked my world," says the Curators Professor Emerita of the Sinclair School of Nursing. A long-term care researcher known nationally for her work improving care in nursing homes, Rantz gathered a team for an urgent strategy session — on Zoom, of course. "How do we help these homes and residents survive?"



Dr. Marilyn Rantz

illnesses. And staff, visitors and other health care workers are frequently coming and going.

"Nursing homes were unprepared for this sort of event," says Lori Popejoy, an associate professor in the School of Nursing. "They didn't have the people who were skilled to help them. And the community and public health industry was not prepared to support nursing homes — or, I believe, they overestimated what nursing homes could do on their own."



Dr. Lori Popejoy

So nursing school faculty mobilized two of its programs to assist the state's 524 nursing homes: Quality Improvement Program for Missouri (QIPMO) and Missouri Quality Initiative (MOQI). One year later, the QIPMO and MOQI teams have fielded over 10,000 phone calls and emails from nursing homes; provided

Historically underfunded and understaffed, nursing homes are not designed for a pandemic: Residents reside in close, often shared, living arrangements. They share caregivers. Many are especially vulnerable to the effects of respiratory-borne

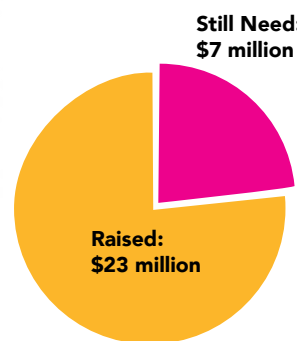
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guidance and support to 1,165 long-term care facilities in all 114 counties; distributed 9,000 face shields; and sponsored support groups that reached 34,693 nursing home staff and administrators.

“Many of them have been able to hang on and keep going through this frustrating and overwhelming time,” Rantz says. “They were feeling so alone and not supported or valued in many ways as health care organizations. These programs were a lifeline for those facilities.”

Missouri’s Dedicated Help System

QIPMO has been working with nursing homes in Missouri for over 20 years. Started by Rantz in 1999, the program is a cooperative service between the MU School of Nursing and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services that offers consultative and educational assistance to nursing homes at no charge. Gerontological nurse experts and licensed administrator coaches perform on-site visits to offer technical assistance, care-planning help and clinical consultations.

“It could be on downloading CMS reports. It could be coding appropriately to reflect the resident’s clinical condition and get the correct reimbursement. It might be on documentation or helping strengthen their quality improvement processes. We do mock surveys, in-services, webinars. Just anything that they really need,” says Crystal Plank, a clinical nurse educator with QIPMO.

Essentially, QIPMO is a dedicated help system for long-term care facilities in Missouri — the only one of its kind in the country. In 2019 alone, the QIPMO team made 701 site visits in 379 skilled nursing facilities to assist with quality improvement. Residents at these facilities fall less, have fewer behavior-related problems and are less likely to get pressure ulcers.

The early success of QIPMO contributed to the nursing school receiving a grant in 2012 from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid to launch MOQI. This project, which ended in December 2020, embedded advanced practice nurses (APRNs) in 16 St. Louis nursing homes. Their clinical expertise helped the frontline staff recognize problems early and implement evidence-based interventions in the nursing home to

avoid hospitalization, and their advanced education helped support facility-level change efforts.

When the first case of COVID-19 in Missouri was initially reported March 7, 2020, in St. Louis, the QIPMO and MOQI teams responded immediately. “Nurses are problem-solvers,” says Amy Vogelsmeier, an associate professor in the nursing school and co-lead of the MOQI project with Popejoy. “There was fear and anxiety coupled with this sense of, OK, now we have to do something.”

Nursing Home Helpers

Nursing home staff were making masks out of coffee filters and wearing trash bags for gowns. Some facilities didn’t even have hand sanitizer. Not designed for isolating large numbers of residents, homes had difficulty keeping infected and exposed residents separated. And leaders were being inundated with emails from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CMS, DHSS, and other health care organizations with — sometimes conflicting — guidelines and information.

“There was so much information coming from so many different places, and you’re trying to wade through all of the new studies and links that were coming out,” says Lisa Wilson, a MOQI APRN who worked at a nursing home outside of St. Louis through 2020.

So the QIPMO team distilled the ever-changing infection control practices into operational guidelines for nurses and administrators, such as a COVID-specific SBAR tool, work criteria for health care providers with suspected COVID and best practices to combat increased behaviors among residents due to loneliness and isolation, and distributed them on a special COVID-19 page of its website, NursingHomeHelp.org. “We had this established network because this program has been in place for 20 years across the state,” Rantz says. “So we could blast out information to multiple people in each nursing home and get that stuff distributed to them quickly in usable ways. That was our strength, and it really helped.”



Dr. Amy Vogelsmeier

QIPMO also held different weekly statewide virtual support group meetings and learning sessions for administrators, directors of nursing, MOQI APRNs and first responders to ask questions, assimilate new regulations and share infection prevention strategies. “People were just sort of living in the moment and trying to manage what was being dealt to them at the time,” Vogelsmeier says. “These Zoom meetings helped them think through plans for when they actually have their first positive patient and anticipate what was coming instead of just responding to what was happening.”

They were also safe places for staff to share experiences. “You feel like you’re like on this island, even though there are all these other nursing homes around going through the same thing,” says Carrie Bowling, another MOQI APRN at a nursing home outside of St. Louis. “These support calls gave you a window into those other homes. It really was a collaboration that gave us insight into what we could do differently.”

Adds Wilson: “They helped you feel supported. Just knowing that if you needed some PPE, they were out there looking for it.”

QIPMO developed a resource list, helped nursing homes gain access to the PPE supply chain and collaborated with various community organizations to distribute more than 9,000 donated face shields to homes throughout the state. Once PPE supplies became available, MOQI APRNs played a critical role in coaching staff about the proper use of PPE, implementing new infection control systems and developing COVID care units. It wasn’t easy. There were high rates of staff turnover, and the staff who stayed were increasingly fearful of infecting both the residents and their own families.

Yet Wilson says her advanced education and the support she received from QIPMO and MOQI prepared her. “In early April, the emergency room in the hospital near us said: ‘Do not send us any residents unless they are extremely sick. Try to treat in place,’” Wilson says. “Well, with the MOQI program and the focus that our program put on early disease detection and infection control, we were already doing that. We had things in place to treat people there. So it was kind of like, OK, well, we’ll just treat people here like we’ve been doing.”

Bowling agrees: “It was very important to me that we don’t panic. That was something I kept reinforcing with

my administrator and the DON when we had our first positive: Stay the course. Panic breeds panic. We are the example. If we are just like, ‘This is a fact of life, and this is the way it is,’ it helps keep things calm. And there’s just a sense of security having a nurse practitioner in the building anyway. When you do have somebody that’s having problems, they feel like there’s somebody else there that they can turn to.”

The Future of Long-term Care

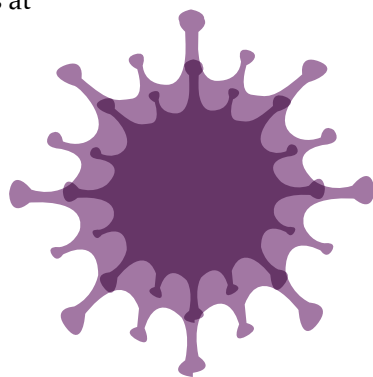
After the MOQI grant ended in 2020, MU researchers evaluated the program and found the APRNs helped reduce avoidable hospitalizations and emergency room visits, leading to better overall health and more than \$31 million in savings. The pandemic only further highlighted APRNs’ essential role in improving the quality of care for nursing home residents and providing much-needed guidance for leadership and staff in times of crisis. In January, Missouri started vaccinating first responders and adults over 65, and in February, the state had one of the lowest nursing home resident death rates per 100 residents in the country.

“Nursing home leaders are sharing stories about how they’re thinking beyond COVID, which is actually a good thing, and identifying that through all of this chaos and stress and all these challenges that, in many ways, their staff has pulled together,” Vogelsmeier says

Adds Popejoy: “I think they have their feet under them, so they’re not constantly being washed out by a wave of COVID. There’s an understanding that they need to be cautious and optimistic. They want to see nursing homes become homes again, not places of quarantine and isolation.”

QIPMO continues to publish updated guidelines on its website and now offers monthly statewide support groups via Zoom, and the MOQI team is developing a business model that works to carry forward innovations developed from the School of Nursing grant. The researchers believe their evidence and experience can help inform the national discussion about what happened in long-term care during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as change the national narrative about nursing homes’ management in the future.

“We’re looking at how to deal with future events in a more systematic way and to offer a vision for how this should be organized for nursing homes differently in the future,” Popejoy says. ■





Christopher Wilson, BSN '17
ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

A man on a mission, actually a man who has accomplished many missions. Wilson serves as a staff nurse in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at University Hospital and as a critical care nurse officer in the United States Naval Reserve.

Wilson, an ROTC graduate from Truman State University, served as an Army captain recruiter for the Missouri Army National Guard for three years. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 as a security forces commander. An assault on the base brought him to the bedside of his fellow soldiers injured in the attacks. He observed the nursing care and support provided to his comrades. Wilson realized "becoming a nurse was what I (he) needed to do."

Returning home from Afghanistan, Wilson remained in the Missouri Army National Guard and accepted a position as a care team associate at University Hospital. His desire to become a nurse (A MIZZOU NURSE) guided him to the Accelerated option, where he excelled as a student. As noted by a Sinclair School of Nursing faculty member, "Chris is one of the best all-around students that I have had the pleasure to teach. He was an excellent student" but "it was his other characteristics

that makes him stand out from the other students." A colleague in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit (ICU) wrote, "Chris' leadership qualities are noteworthy. He has been in the Surgical ICU since graduation. During this time, he has become a strong leader and a great mentor to the new staff. He is well respected by all of our trauma surgeons (and that in itself is a great feat) and his coworkers. He always has a smile and a kind word for everyone."

Wilson continues to give back by precepting senior practicum students every semester. Even when he is not assigned a student, he will jump in and provide learning experiences. He actively recruits students who are considering other programs. He feels Mizzou has the best program and is proud to let everyone know he is a Tiger.

Wilson felt the need to do more in early 2020. After consultation with his wife, Nichole, and their two small children, he enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve as a critical care nurse officer. They were well aware he might be deployed to take care of COVID-19 patients. He willingly accepted the assignment to New York where he cared for COVID-19 patients for two months. During this time, he relied on the knowledge and critical thinking skills he learned at Mizzou. A modest man, he becomes very quiet when thanked for his service. He appreciates the thanks but he does it because he feels it is his duty to serve his country.



Julie Stumpf, BSN '10

ALUMNI OF THE YEAR AWARD

Caring for others, especially children, has been an integral part of Stumpf's life. At the age of 16, she volunteered in the playroom at St. Louis Children's Hospital (SLCH). With a true heart of gold, she became a camp counselor for, a then brand new, camp for children with heart defects with 32 enrolled campers. Since

2011, she has served as the camp's director, now known as Camp Rhythm. The camp continues to grow, providing an amazing experience for over 250 children and their families.

As a new Mizzou graduate, Stumpf returned to SLCH to begin her nursing career. She currently serves as the nurse coordinator for the Cardiac Neurodevelopmental Clinic and High Risk Infant Interstage Monitoring Program. She is the first-line provider for the most complex cardiac infants discharged from the Heart Center. These infants are at an increased risk for compromise and possible death. She assesses and triages patients, and provides education and reassurance to often overwhelmed parents. She is described as being compulsive and meticulous, which are traits so critical to providing safe care for fragile infants. Focusing on family-centered care, her influence is keen in emphasizing quality of life for the child with a chronic heart disease and their family following discharge and over the ensuing years.

Understanding the importance of continuous learning, Stumpf completed a master of science in nursing with an emphasis in leadership from Webster University. She is described, "as developing into a nursing leader and expert in the burgeoning field of neurodevelopment in pediatric cardiology patients." Utilizing her knowledge of nursing and commitment to continuous quality improvement, she effectively navigated the SLCH and the Washington University administrative structure to employ a new application to monitor high-risk cardiac infants. As described in a letter of recommendation, "She persevered over a dozen months through paperwork, revised protocols, and e-mails working with BJC Health Systems and Washington University School of Medicine to gain funding and approval to have an iPad app that parents could use to track their infant's weight and oxygen saturations that would automatically be pushed to the medical team for review. Now all families with high-risk cardiac infants use this program, which is convenient, easy to use, and aids in providing safe follow-up care."

Her nominator shared, "Julie exemplifies the very best qualities in nursing, and I would choose her to care for my children, my loved ones, and me." Another colleague wrote, "The St. Louis Children's Hospital/Washington University Heart Center is leading the way with Julie's incredible leadership and dedication to patient family centered care to some of the sickest heart babies and their families in our communities."



Geneva Perkins, BSN '59
HUMANITARIAN AWARD

An accomplished health care professional with over 60 years of dedicated service to making the world better through nursing, Perkins knew she wanted to help people and contribute to society as a nurse since the early age of 8. She rode a bus approximately 30 miles to attend an integrated high school and later enrolled at Lincoln University. While there, a 'wonderful counselor' changed her life; he told her she should transfer to the University of Missouri. She did and was one of the first four African American graduates of the School of Nursing. She returned home and began her career as staff nurse at Callaway County Hospital.

As the ravages of the Vietnam war continued and the need to care for the returning wounded increased, Perkins relocated to Kansas City. She accepted a charge nurse position at the VA Medical Center. After 8 years of caring for patients, she saw the need to educate and develop the next generation of nurses. For the next 13 years, Perkins taught theory and supervised the clinical experience of nursing students. Research Hospital School of Nursing, St. Luke's School of Nursing, and Avila College benefited from her nursing expertise.

In 1976, Perkins earned a master of arts in adult education. She advanced in a variety of leadership positions at medical institutions in the Kansas City area. She completed her professional career at the VA Medical Center, where she held leadership positions including acting associate chief nursing service for education.

After retirement in 1998, her passion to serve continued. She traveled on international mission trips to offer humanitarian aid and provide services in the Dominican Republic and Ethiopia. In 1999, she became the founder/administrator/nurse of the church-based, free, wellness clinic established at Trinity Temple Church of God in Christ in Grandview, Missouri to address the needs of underserved in the community. The services include health screening tests and health education programs, as well as blood donation drives, exercise classes, educational screenings for children, and a support group for bereaved parents. Pre-COVID, she would be at the clinic at least 2 days a week.

Perkins is a determined and fearless trailblazer. She broke through and overcame gender and racial barriers. Dedication, drive, perseverance, persistence, compassion, caring, ambition, and accomplishment are fitting descriptors for this professional nurse.

31st annual awards ceremony



Jane Armer

HONORARY ALUMNI AWARD

Dr. Jane Armer is recognized for her 30 years of untiring service to the Sinclair School of Nursing. Armer began her educational journey as a diploma nurse from the Mennonite Hospital in Bloomington, Illinois; BSN from the Goshen College in Indiana; MS(N) from Community Health Nursing, Northern Illinois

University in DeKalb, Illinois; and her PhD from the University of Rochester in New York. As Armer shares, "I came to the University of Missouri in fall 1990, as a newly-minted doctoral-prepared faculty with a 2-year-old and a teenager, the 'bookends' of my nursing education." She completed a National Institute on Aging/National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded three-year postdoctoral program at the University of Iowa.

Armer is an internationally recognized nurse expert and researcher in nursing and lymphedema. Among her many accomplishments, she has served as director of nursing research at Ellis Fischel Cancer Center, founding director of the American Lymphedema Framework Project (ALFP), and member of the National Lymphedema Network Medical Advisory Committee and Lymphology Association of North America Board. The ALFP is housed at Mizzou in the Center

for Lymphedema Research. As principal investigator for grants funded by the NIH, she has conducted extensive work in lymphedema prevalence, signs and symptoms, anthropometric measurement, and self-management among breast cancer survivors; fatigue among persons with lymphedema; and self-management of chronic illness. She assisted on a National Cancer Institute funded grant prospectively examining lower limb lymphedema following gynecological cancer. She has published more than 125 articles, the majority on lymphedema and cancer survivorship. In 2016, Armer was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame.

Armer's passion for and her research abilities are reflected in the professional success of her students. Many of her students have gone on to become phenomenal nurses, teachers, and researchers. She has mentored students from Thailand, Israel, China, Ghana, and South Africa. Like their mentor, two of her prodigies have been named fellows in the American Academy of Nursing. Armer has the ability to explore and support the goals and strengths of her graduate students and to match them with potential funding sources and learning experiences to support their scholarly development and career goals. For her passion for educating Mizzou Nurses, we induct her as an honorary alumna.



Patricia Cowan BSN '81
CITATION OF MERIT AWARD

Cowan holds a PhD from the University of Tennessee and an MSN from the University of Kansas. As an accomplished academician, she currently serves as the dean and professor of the College of Nursing at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Since 2015, she has provided leadership to the College of Nursing

to achieve its mission of scholarly excellence in undergraduate and graduate nursing education, research, and service, which includes clinical practice. Prior to this position, she served as professor and associate dean for academic and student affairs in the College of Nursing at the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center in Memphis.

Cowan, a noted researcher with over 50 funded research grants/contracts, has extensive publications in peer-reviewed journals as well as numerous peer-reviewed published proceedings/abstracts. Over her career, Cowan has merged science, teaching, and patient care to address health disparities. Her scientific work contributed to understanding the relationships that exist among ethnic and racial group membership, lifestyle behaviors, and health disparities in adults and youth with and without renal impairment. Research teams that she led or participated in obtained over \$5,000,000 in external funding. Successful

research-practice collaborations resulted in the rapid translation of research findings to provide evidence-based care to minority populations in the areas of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases prevention and management. These partnerships provided rich opportunities to address health disparities while modeling interprofessional, culturally-competent care to students. Simultaneously, Cowan developed an innovative recruitment and retention program that resulted in a highly educated, diverse nursing workforce qualified to lead practice and research initiatives to reduce health disparities and inequities.

Cowan is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, American Academy of Nursing, American Nursing Association, Arkansas Center for Nursing, and Southern Nursing Research Society. She has served in various leadership roles in American Nursing Association state organizations in Nebraska, Kansas, New Jersey, Tennessee and Arkansas. Among Cowan's many honors, she has been recognized as a Fellow in the Leadership in Academic Nursing Program, Fellow in the Wharton Executive Leadership Program, and Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing. She was also honored as one of the Great 100 Nurses of Arkansas and received the University of Arkansas Medical Science Phenomenal Woman award. We are very proud to recognize Dr. Patty Cowan for her many accomplishments and contributions to nursing.



Marshall Stewart
DISTINGUISHED FRIEND OF THE SCHOOL

The Distinguished Friend of the School Award goes to Marshall Stewart who is the Chief Engagement Officer and Vice Chancellor for Extension & Engagement at the University of Missouri.

Upon arriving at Mizzou, Marshall quickly toured every county in the state to understand the needs of Missourians; health consistently emerged as one of the top three needs across every county in MO. Currently one of the three primary initiatives of the University of Missouri Extension and Engagement is health, along with economic development and education. Marshall not only advocates for health, but also for nursing care as one of the answers to the health needs of citizens of this state – especially in rural areas. He has been a spokesperson for expanding the scope of APRN practice and enlisted the support of the Farm Bureau to voice support for change to Missouri legislators. Marshall is a friend to many people in this state and we are proud to acknowledge his support for nursing and SSON with the 2021 Distinguished Friend of the School award.

2020 ALUMNI ORGANIZATION AWARDS

- Alumni Achievement Award** - Courtney Miller BSN '12, MS(N) '18
- Alumni of the Year Award** - Michele Kennett BSN '87, MS(N) '93
- Humanitarian Award** - Jeffrey Gage PhD '05
- Honorary Alumni Award** - Marilyn Rantz
- Citation of Merit Award** - Nelda Godfrey BSN '77, PhD '99
- Distinguished Friends of the School**
- Gregory MS(N) '80 & Diane Lind

2021 STUDENT AWARDS

- 7th Semester Student Award for Excellence** - Christian Campos
- 8th Semester Student Award for Excellence** - Grace Optican
- Accelerated Student Award for Excellence** - Olivia Lawrence
- RN-BSN Student Award for Excellence** - Dalyn Bird
- MS(N) Student Award for Excellence** - Chelsea Richardson
- DNP Student Award for Excellence** - Christina Hoff Vollrath
- PhD Student Award for Excellence** - Chuka Emezue

2021 FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS

- Staff Award for Excellence** - Ronda Cramer
- Faculty Award for Excellence in Research** - Jo-Ana Chase
- Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching** - Val Bader
- Betty Crim Faculty Enhancement Award** - Sue Yun Fowler



STUDENT HIGHLIGHT
CHARLIE BELLEW

Written by Casey Wendleton

Charlie Bellew is a go-getter. After graduating high school in 2009, Charlie headed to college. Like many college students, she couldn't settle on a career path. After trying graphic design and criminology, she wanted a career helping people. She settled on medical assisting, where she worked in a lab as a phlebotomist.

"I thought it was going to be like nursing," she recalls of how she had a calling to be there for people when they were in their worse moments. But soon, she found that the hours of lab work were not fulfilling. Unsure of where to go from here, she decided to join the military.

Finding Her Way

With two years of medical background working in a lab, she hoped the Air Force would allow her to do something medically related. Instead, she was assigned to security forces and tasked with guarding the base on deployments to Africa and Kuwait. Her eyes were opened to poverty, cultural suppression, starvation and hardship. She knew that once she got back to the U.S. she wanted to be in a position to help others. "I didn't feel like I was on the side to help people," Charlie explains. Deep down she longed for something more.

"I feel like that whole experience brought me down to what life is really about. It's not about being better than everybody else, it's about understanding that we are all on the same planet, the same level," she says.

On one of her deployment assignments in Kuwait, she was sent to assist a girl with a medical emergency and arrived before any medical assistance. "I just sat down with her and I held her hand, and I'm like, I don't know what to do," Charlie recalls. Afterwards, her team teased her for 'playing nurse,' but Charlie knew that she couldn't stand the thought of the young girl going through such a rough moment in her life and having nobody there for her. At that moment, Charlie awoke to a calling she had felt before. "That actually sounds like something I want to do." She recalls.

Her Mission became Nursing

The hardships she experienced in other countries humbled her, and the contrast opened her eyes to the immense opportunities offered in the United States. Her life kept pointing her back to nursing. When she got out of active duty in January 2020, she came home with a new focus and applied to the traditional nursing program at the Sinclair School of Nursing.

"I know I'm starting late in my journey into nursing, but it took years of failing and growing to discover who I am and what I want. I don't think I would appreciate the opportunity at 20 the way I do at 29," she says.

Charlie aspires to be a flight nurse. "I want to be that vital person...the light at the end of the tunnel of them suffering. You are the ray of hope for them," she explains.

Charlie did not stop searching for what she wanted. She has worked through all the challenges to get here, and going back to college during a pandemic is just

(Continued on page 21) ▼

Top: Charlie Bellew 2020 during simulation class. Bottom, 2018 during her deployment to Africa.





with sights set on being a clinical trials manager when she graduates. Emily chuckles as she explains the jump landed her with a bunch of 23-year-olds.

A mother of three, wife and still working full-time in research, Emily finds a way to do it all. She attributes massive amounts of coffee, family support and a flexible job. "And I have a very supportive husband," Cantrell adds. Troubleshooting is nothing new to Emily, it is part of being a good nurse and she excels at it. "It's what a nurse is at their core, you are troubleshooting humans," she explains while adding that having three kids has been a great experience troubleshooting little humans.

A Second Time Around

Emily's new experience has been a contrast to her first college experience 20 years ago. She entered the college scene again amidst the pandemic. When asked how this time has been different, she was very positive. "It has been a silver lining for me, because I work full-time and I have a family. If a kiddo is sick, I can be at home but still be at my classes through Zoom so it's been absolutely wonderful for me."

Going through the college experience at home takes a self-starter. Emily recognizes that being older, her focus is different than that of her 23-year-old classmates. She empathizes with her younger classmates because they are learning first-hand what it is like to be self-motivated.

"This is not coursework that you can cram for, you have got to be self-motivated in the pandemic to get these things done," she explains. Most of the work during this time is virtual, but this has allowed small groups of classmates to join together to help each other study and support one another.

Being in a different phase of her life Emily is a natural leader and motivator to her fellow



2021 Emily Cantrell at the SSON Simulation Center.

classmates. "I do take initiative, I'll do it because I do not have the time to waste. I have to get this done," Emily explains.

An interesting fact about Emily is; she loves to travel. She has been to every continent except Antarctica and the pandemic has kept her grounded, so when she heard of the first-ever virtual study abroad program, hosted by the Sinclair School of Nursing and the Montevideo institute in Costa Rica, she was in. The group worked with community members and did a capstone project to address potential needs in the area.

"My group's project was researching mental health services for families during the pandemic. Services there are very few and far between. The closest to Montevideo were about an hour and a half drive," she explains while giving raving reviews of the experience.

The fearless jump into nursing at 40 has only strengthened the drive in Emily. Her advice to other aspiring nurses is a very good one. She explains to not let the fear of failure hold you back. "Students are afraid to make any kind of mistake that they just want to back off. You're going to fail, but you have to learn somehow. Nurses, *do*." ■

(Continued from page 19)
Charlie Bellew ▼

another challenge. Charlie embodies her favorite quote from Dwayne The Rock Johnson, "*Be humble, be hungry, and be the hardest worker in the room.*"

Charlie's instructors see her exceptional talent. Her resilience in adapting to her patients' needs and delivering empathetic yet individualized care is clear.

"Working with Charlie has been a reminder, even to myself as a nurse, that a high standard should be the common standard. She is a student that can teach you as much as you can teach her," says Instructor Hillary Claunch.

Charlie has found her place. If you ask her what makes a good nurse, she will tell you that it isn't good grades, "you have to be a good *person*." ■



Dr. Bridgett Robbins

Robbins Research Making an Impact at MU Health Care

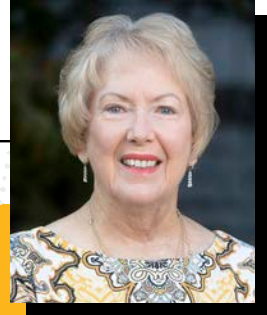
Bridgett Robbins, DNP, RN, CMSRN, NE-BC is a 2020 graduate of the DNP in leadership program. Her DNP project, which was completed in 2020, helped improve care delivered at MU Health Care where she is a Director of Nursing at University Hospital. Bridgett's wound scout project has assisted MU Health Care in detecting potential deep tissue injuries upon admission. Her study ensured correct classification of deep tissue injures instead of hospital acquired pressure injuries during a patients stay. MU Sinclair School of Nursing and MU Health Care have worked together to create Evidence-based Practice for the needs of the community. Robbins is also a 2021 MU Health Care Daisy Leader Award recipient. ■



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