

Jonas Nursing Scholar *Annie Rohan*

“This Changes Everything”

Not long ago, Annie Rohan '91 found herself at a mid-career crossroad, wanting to more effectively apply all that she had learned in neonatal nursing to education and research. Only two “little” things stood in her way: a PhD and the way to pay for it. Thanks to the generosity of philanthropists Barbara and Donald Jonas, she has the latter and is now studying for the former.

A native New Yorker, Ms. Rohan is one of the first six Jonas Nursing Scholars, part of a program created by the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence designed to address the nation's accelerating shortage of nursing faculty.

“This changes everything,” says Ms. Rohan, a certified nurse practitioner in both neonatology and pediatrics. “I love what I do, but it was always my dream to go back to school and attain a PhD. However, I have three children. I made a personal vow to achieve the degree at the highest level possible and without compromising my children's college savings.”

Ms. Rohan had received scholarship offers from other schools, “but they weren't Columbia University,” she adds. The Jonas Scholarship resolved her dilemma.

After finishing her master's degree in maternal-child health from Columbia, Ms. Rohan joined the staff of New York Hospital - Cornell Medical Center. Later, while working for a private pediatric neurosurgical practice, she was the first nurse practitioner to obtain admitting privileges at Long Island Jewish Medical Center.

Most recently, she was a neonatal nurse practitioner at Stony Brook University Hospital on Long Island, taking care of high-risk neonates, with a specialty interest in high-risk populations, especially minorities, adolescent mothers, and survivors of extreme prematurity.

by Gary Goldenberg

No stranger to scholarly practice, Ms. Rohan has published several articles and has precepted medical students. As a clinician, she has demonstrated the significant benefit of proactive over reactive management approaches to neonatal intensive care. In her doctoral studies, she aims to carry this approach over to maternal behaviors in vulnerable populations, with the goal of improving birth outcomes, parenting behaviors, and child development. She is also interested in hospice care for children and the bioethics of newborn intensive care.

“I love this profession, and I so want to continue doing it, but at a different level. I see myself practicing for many more decades, but I also want to help develop policy and curriculum. It is difficult to do that on a significant scale in the clinical setting and without the knowledge that one gains from a doctoral education,” she explains.

“I don't know how to thank the Jonas family,” adds Ms. Rohan. “Everyone is concerned about the shortage of nurses, but until now, the mission hasn't been embraced. Their vision is simply remarkable.”

Jonas Nursing Scholar *Shanelle Nelson*

An Opportunity to Share

by Gary Goldenberg

If the intent of the Jonas Nursing Scholarship is to encourage more nurses to pursue teaching careers, it worked like a charm on Shanelle Nelson.

Ms. Nelson, a quality management specialist for the pediatric cardiac and lung transplant program at Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian, was already thinking about getting a doctorate in nursing, but mainly to strengthen her research skills. “I hadn't even thought about teaching until I was offered the scholarship,” she says.

It wasn't just the financial support that convinced her. The scholarship, which requires recipients to teach for four years in New York City after graduation, “gave me a more clear-cut direction,” she says. “It got me thinking that teaching is an inevitable part of professional advancement. You teach what you know.”

A native of New York, Ms. Nelson started her career as a hospital administrator at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan. Desiring more patient interaction, she enrolled in nursing school and worked part-time as a nurse technician in a post-anesthesia care unit.

In 2004, she entered the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, where she earned a master's degree in health leadership. During her final year, she

served as a research assistant on a study entitled, “Re-admission Factors in Community Dwelling Elderly with Acute Heart Failure.” She also worked part-time in the neonatal intensive care unit at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia.

Next, she joined the staff at New York-Presbyterian, developing an interest in hospital nursing workforce issues, such as the relationship of staffing, shift length, and fatigue to patient safety. She intends to delve further into workforce issues during her PhD studies at Columbia.

“I'm also interested in complementary and alternative therapies, particularly in neonatal intensive care,” she adds. “I've been fascinated with Kangaroo Care,” the practice of placing preemies, clad only in diapers, on the parent's bare chest, tummy to tummy. Developed at Columbia, Kangaroo Care has been found to significantly lower infant mortality rates.

Ms. Nelson looks forward to the day, about four years from now, when she will be a nursing professor, with a new set of skills and experiences. “It will be a great opportunity to share that with other nurses,” she says.

Shanelle Nelson



The Annual Fund

Once a Nurse...

Ellen Gottesman Garber, Class of '76, had been out of nursing for two decades, so it was not surprising that the nursing profession and her alma mater were barely on her radar. That all changed in a matter of hours.

Several years ago, she found herself back in the hospital, this time as a patient under the care of nurses who were certainly competent, though not exceptional. "When I saw what my standards were for nursing care, and what I had experienced as a patient, it really woke me up to the terrific education I was given," she recalls.

After her brush with garden-variety nurses, she began paying more attention to what was happening at the School of Nursing. She was particularly pleased to learn that the School had been consistently raising its educational standards, requiring all students to aim toward a master's and encouraging more and more to pursue a doctorate.

Ms. Garber was also impressed with the caliber of the students, as well as their dedication to society's great challenges. "Many of them intend to work in inner cities or in clinics that serve families and children," she says. "That's terrific."

"All this happened at a time in my life when I could start giving," she adds, "so

I decided to start giving directly to the Annual Fund."

By contributing to the fund, which goes directly to student financial aid, Ms. Garber is ensuring that bright and dedicated students will get the same educational opportunities she once had. "I had a terrific experience at Columbia," she remembers. "It was a great medical center back then, and I imagine it is even better now. There were people in every field of nursing or medicine who were willing to teach you whatever you wanted to learn. And you felt you were an equal member of a team, rather than just the person who was waiting to be told what to do."

Ambitious and civic-minded, Ms. Garber is not all that different from the nursing students of today. After graduating from Columbia, she joined the staff of the prestigious Denver Children's Hospital, looking for an adventure far away from her New Jersey home. A year later, an opportunity came along to work in labor and delivery at Denver City Hospital, a public hospital. "It certainly was a big switch from caring for very sick children," she says. "There is nothing like labor and delivery. Women having babies are basically healthy and for the most part need a little care in an intense time. The outcomes were generally great, although we did have many poor patients who

had no prenatal care. There were some unhappy outcomes, of course." After a few years, she switched specialties once again, moving on to Rocky Mountain Planned Parenthood as a family-planning nurse practitioner.

In time, she planned a family of her own and left nursing, with some regrets. "But as people say, once a nurse, always a nurse," she says. "The skills I learned in nursing – how to assess a situation to make a plan and solve problems – are skills that I've been able to use in so many things I've done, not just in nursing care." They certainly came in handy during her own pregnancy and her years rearing children.

Ms. Garber and her family moved back East some years ago, settling in Connecticut and then in Westchester. Just this winter, she and her husband, who works in commercial real estate, found an apartment on Riverside Drive in Manhattan, just up the road from the School of Nursing.

These days, Ms. Garber keeps busy with a variety of activities, ranging from biking and travel to community work and philanthropy. "I'm always volunteering somewhere," she says.



The Annual Fund

Dreams of a Second Career

Below, left:
Student Chinette Salveron, recipient of Ellen Gottesman Garber's Arlene Gottesman Reff Nursing Scholarship.

Below, right:
Student Sara Church displaying the Helen Ellison Ellenberger '57 Nursing Scholarship Award.



"I always joked around that if I had to pick a completely new career, I would become a nurse-midwife," says Sara Church.

No one took her seriously, not even Ms. Church herself. "I didn't even know if there were many midwives left," she adds.

However, after three years working in a cytogenetics lab at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital diagnosing chromosome abnormalities, the idea didn't seem so far-fetched. "I loved my work in the lab," she says, "but I wanted that patient connection and to get to know the people behind the laboratory specimens. I decided I was going to follow my dreams and go back to school and study midwifery."

"The scholarship and grant money offered by the School of Nursing really made that possible," adds Ms. Church, who was awarded the Helen Ellison Ellenberger '57 Nursing Scholarship. "Other schools had slightly lower tuition, but offered less scholarship money and more loans."



Ms. Church, who hails from Norwalk, CT, enrolled in Columbia's Combined BS/MS Program, an accelerated nursing curriculum for non-nurse college graduates, designed to prepare students for a career in advanced-practice nursing.

She has just completed the final "integration" phase of the nurse-midwifery program, working in a federally funded health clinic at Phelps Memorial Hospital in Tarrytown, NY. During the year-long clinical practicum, she received hands-on experience in a prenatal clinic and a labor and delivery unit, mostly serving uninsured and underinsured patients.

The experience has helped shape her career plans. "I would like to stay in the New York City area and to work with underserved populations, helping women have healthy, normal childbirth experiences," she says.

During her studies, Ms. Church got a taste of academe, co-authoring a paper in *The Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*. The paper reported on a study that examined which method of pushing – passive descent or early pushing – most benefits women with epidurals during second-stage labor. She is currently preparing a second paper for *The Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health*. "The environment at Columbia is so supportive of research and academics," she says. "It's easy to do there."

Ms. Church can't say enough about her Columbia experience: "There were so many people involved in educating us – from the professors to the administrators to the donors – and it takes every single one of them to get us through it. I certainly appreciate all of it."