The Role of Nursing in a Disaster

By Angela Mueller-Sawyer, ’84

Disaster Nursing is not a subject taught in most schools of nursing, nor is it often a career goal. At this particular time there is an increasing interest in disaster work. There is the heightened awareness of the possible effect of disasters on our personal lives. Natural disasters and armed conflicts leave millions of people in need of aid every year. Humanitarian Aid organizations are active in every country in need worldwide.

Many nurses are drawn to help during times of disaster. The reason this field is difficult is a simple one. Most nurses are married and have children. Disaster nursing isn’t located in a specific building and with specific hours. The location is always changing and disasters don’t follow a schedule. Unless one is single and lightly employed or retired, it’s difficult to leave home on a moment’s notice and for varying lengths of time.

I will limit myself to discussing domestic disaster nursing with the Red Cross. The Red Cross has always utilized nurses in a wide variety of disasters, both natural and man-made. It’s not the high adventure drama that most people imagine. Because of obvious logistics, it’s difficult to be on site at the time of a disaster. Hurricanes, flash floods, earthquakes, and plane crashes do their damage in a matter of seconds, minutes, or hours.

Disaster nursing is post-disaster damage control. The people affected are in need of crisis counseling; they have immediate needs in order to begin the road to recovery. Nursing in this situation involves seeing to the immediate health care needs of people displaced to shelters; staffing aid stations for rescue workers; supervising 24-hour kitchens; and filling out the paperwork needed to replace items lost in the disaster, such as medications, hearing aids, glasses, crutches, nebulizers, and hospital beds. It also involves visiting patients in the hospital and sometimes helping to staff the morgues.

Sometimes the nurse will work at a Service Center, where disaster victims come to discuss how the disaster has affected them and what they have lost. Psychological support is a huge factor in this effort. Sometimes nurses go door to door in the affected area to find people who are not aware of the availability of help or for some reason have not pursued it. Just the presence of a helping hand, the sight of a person who cares, provides overwhelming emotional support for the client.

In New York City, after the September 11th attack, nurses visited the injured and their families in the hospital and inquired about specific needs and concerns, both financial and personal. They also made phone calls to those who were treated and released, found and paid for alternative housing for those displaced from their homes, saw to transportation for the elderly, did physical assessments, made referrals to doctors, kept in touch with the advice of the Public Health Department and handed out cough drops, Kleenex, masks, gloves, brooms, and Tylenol by the thousand fold. It seems that we never do enough but we do our part and it’s rewarding.

There is another reason that Disaster Nursing is not taught in the curriculum, it’s not a paying career opportunity. The exception is Disaster Reserve, in which one has to go to at least three disasters a year and stay from beginning to end, which usually takes months. The state of Montana also allows its employees to take a three-week paid leave of absence to work on a disaster. This does not stop any nurse from getting her feet wet by volunteering locally. There are plenty of single-family fires and occasional train derailments, winter storms and floods to keep us all busy and helping.

College of Nursing Vision Statement

The College will foster excellence in Professional Nursing as a key for a healthy Montana through...

Innovative baccalaureate and graduate education

Dynamic research and scholarship

Creative service

Exceptional practice

Progressive local and international partnerships
Dear Alums and Friends—Welcome to 2002. I don’t know about you, but I am ready to leave the events of September 11, 2001 behind and move into a new day and a new year. Thank you to Angela Mueller-Sawyer for reminding us of the value of nurses during such difficult times.

The momentum of the College of Nursing has not stopped due to national events—in fact, if anything, we have taken our responsibilities as a large and quality nursing education program even more seriously. In the limited space of this publication, let me give you highlights of some of our recent efforts:

* We welcomed a new Development Officer and added a marketing piece to her job description which increased the position to full-time employment. Colleen Schwanke began her assignment with the College of Nursing when I say that we are pleased she has joined our staff.

* We have begun the process of making our undergraduate program even more accessible to students in Montana by initiating an extension from our Missoula campus site for a small group of place-bound students in the Flathead Valley. We will be offering lower division nursing courses in the summer and fall of 2002 to approximately 16 students. In addition, approximately eight students will be able to stay in Kalispell for their junior and senior nursing courses under the supervision of the Missoula Campus Director, Dr. Jean Shreffler-Grant, under the direction of Missoula faculty, and with on-site instructors to provide oversight for clinical experiences.

* We have begun the process of revising the undergraduate curriculum to reflect the many changes in health care and the many roles of baccalaureate nurses. We will begin implementation of the new curriculum next fall.

* We have received federal funding from the National Institute of Nursing Research to open a Research Center for the study of chronic health conditions for people living in rural areas. The College of Nursing is one of seven distinguished universities to have received such a Center distinction. (Please refer to the article on page four of this publication by Project Director Dr. Clarann Weinert, for more details.) I know that I speak for everyone in the College of Nursing when I say that we are committed to maintaining an excellent nursing education program—especially now. No one knows what lies ahead for the United States—but we do know that nurses will continue to play a very important part of any scenario and we must make sure they are prepared to do just that. I hope this newsletter finds you healthy, happy and surrounded by those you love and doing the job you enjoy. I will continue to send you emails on a periodic basis—and if any of you would like to be added to the list, please email me at lacord@montana.edu.

I hope to meet as many of our alums as possible. If you are ever in Bozeman, please call or stop by Sherrick Hall and introduce yourself. I want to serve our current and past students well so please don’t hesitate to call (406-994-2710) or email me (cschwanke@montana.edu) with any questions or suggestions you may have about development and marketing. Also, please give me your feedback on what information you would like to have included in this quarterly newsletter. Wishing you all the best in 2002!

Hello! I wanted to take this opportunity to say how pleased I am to be a part of the MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing. I have had a busy five months with the College of Nursing since I began my work here in August, 2001. I am enjoying learning about the College, the nursing profession, and health care in Montana. These past few months, I have had the opportunity to travel around the state, visit our various campuses, and meet some of our alums. The faculty and staff in the College of Nursing are amazing, and I feel so honored to work with such incredible people and for such a prestigious institution.

During my time at the College of Nursing, I hope to meet as many of our alums as possible. If you are ever in Bozeman, please call or stop by Sherrick Hall and introduce yourself. I want to serve our current and past students well so please don’t hesitate to call (406-994-2710) or email me (cschwanke@montana.edu) with any questions or suggestions you may have about development and marketing. Also, please give me your feedback on what information you would like to have included in this quarterly newsletter. Wishing you all the best in 2002!
Faculty Highlights

Congratulations to Bozeman Campus Faculty member Pat Butterfield who was asked by Christine Todd Whitman (head of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency) to serve as a member of the Children’s Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC) which was established to assist the EPA in the development of regulations, guidance and policies to address children’s environmental health.

Congratulations to Rita Cheek, faculty member of the Missoula Campus, who has received an award from Montana State University which will allow her to work more on her research next semester.

Sharon Hovey, who has been a member of our faculty for 20 years, retired at the end of December 2001. Sharon served as the Great Falls Campus Director for seven and a half years and will be greatly missed.

Congratulations to the following College of Nursing faculty who were award winners at this year’s Montana Nurses Association Convention: Sharon Hovey, Great Falls Campus, Excellence in Nursing Education and Deb Kern, Bozeman Campus, Excellence in Nursing Education. The convention also gave a tribute to Senator Eve Franklin, Great Falls campus faculty member.

Congratulations to our new faculty members hired in 2001: Mary Cato (Missoula campus), Chad Ellis (Missoula campus), Kay Frey (Missoula campus), Marie Mitchell (Bozeman campus), Nadine Parker (Great Falls campus), and Lloyd Seipert (Missoula campus).

New patient simulators... $2400
New hospital beds... $2500
Volunteers... Priceless!

Volunteers Make a Difference on the Missoula Campus

By John Honsky

When MSU-Bozeman announced that lower division nursing courses would now be delivered at the Missoula Campus, the lab committee decided that simply procuring new equipment and new space would not be sufficient. The clinical skills lab needed to be modernized in order to reflect the current environment of patient comfort and bio-medical advances in health care delivery. In addition, the committee wished to provide a welcoming learning space for the students.

The committee realized that researching, designing, and remodeling would be very time consuming and potentially cost prohibitive. That is where the efforts of community volunteers came in. Mrs. Sue Priddy, RN and Mrs. Lynn Gilfillan, both from Missoula, have extensive experience in community service and skills in marshaling resources. They toured the labs, researched the existing health care environment, then located the equipment and supplies needed to convert the skills lab into an attractive, comfortable, and up-to-date facility. In fact, when it came down to the work, Sue Priddy designed and sewed the curtains herself and then came to the lab to hang them.

The initial cost savings and cosmetic improvements are not the only benefits of this project. The addition of lined window coverings improves the temperature control of the lab, making the room more comfortable for students and faculty and lowering energy costs.

Corporate Contributions Enhance Bio Medical Nursing Education

By John Honsky

Nursing is both a science and an art that blends high touch and high tech in the delivery of care. Nursing education involves education in both of these areas. At MSU-Bozeman’s College of Nursing, students spend time in the clinical skills lab oriented to and practicing on the latest bio-medical equipment.

Thanks to the generosity of Missoula’s local hospitals and two prominent international health care corporations, students at the Missoula Campus have the latest in intravenous infusion pumps with which to work. Community Medical Center and St. Patrick Hospital, along with Abbott Laboratories and the Baxter Health Care Corporation, have donated several thousand dollars worth of equipment and supplies to the clinical skills lab. These gifts ensure the students on the Missoula Campus an advanced nursing education in state-of-the-art bio-medical technology.
Research in the College of Nursing is growing and thriving with a variety of mechanisms of support. The College of Nursing Office of Research and Scholarship has adapted to a new organizational structure, additional services, and increased hours of operation. The primary functions of CONORS are to provide the infrastructure to facilitate nursing science, to nurture faculty researchers, and to enhance the image of nursing research locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. We also have two active support groups to help sustain faculty research. The College of Nursing Doers of Research (CONDOR) is an interest group composed of research-active faculty and the Dean which provides stable and accountable research support, nurtures growth in members research skills, promotes the research environment in the college, and serves as a resource with a pool of experts to review grant applications, abstracts, manuscripts, etc. The College of Nursing Doctoral Students (CONDOCS) is a recently formed group of faculty who are teaching and who are also engaged in doctoral education. Their purpose is to serve as a source of encouragement for each other and to have a place to discuss issues common to the struggles of doctoral education. The third mechanism is an exciting new endeavor that began in August. We received funding from NIH/NINR for a Center for Research on Chronic Health Conditions in Rural Dwellers (CRCHC). The CRCHC provides an infrastructure to support a focused approach to conducting research related to the management of chronic conditions of rural dwellers. The overriding objective of the Center is research capacity building for the nursing faculty and the development of a strong infrastructure to support that research. Ultimately, it is envisioned that collaboration with interdisciplinary colleagues and with nurse scholars across the region will occur in order to better address the needs of rural populations who are living with chronic health problems. Research in the College of Nursing is growing and thriving with a wide variety of funded projects underway. Our research is reflective of the breadth of the discipline of nursing and the skills and interests of our faculty. Studies include: rural elders, nutritional status, use of complementary therapies, reducing occupational disability in rural workers, graduate student’s role behaviors, sleep hygiene, care of chronic conditions in small rural hospitals, telecommunication technology to support rural women with chronic health conditions, telehealth and pain management on the Crow reservation, illness uncertainty and illness management of isolated middle-aged rural women, self-reliance in aging, rural health perceptions, families managing cancer and the spouse’s experience of heart failure. To learn more about these engaging research projects, please visit our web-site at www.montana.edu/wwwconor."
Eye on Missoula

Members of the Dean’s Advisory Council on November 2, 2001:
Back row, left to right: Dean Lea Acord, Jack Burke, Michelle Reed, Julie Hickethier, Connie Schultz, Mike Weber, Pat Wilson, and Gretchen McNeely. Front row, left to right: Karen Pollington, Diane Cromer, Sue Justis, Deb Kern, Mary Munger, and Milly Gutkoski.

Snap Shots

Sharon Hovey Retirement Reception

From Left: Sharon Hovey and Lea Acord

Together one last time: Great Falls faculty and staff gather at Sharon Hovey’s Retirement Reception on December 6, 2001

Row 1: Wendy Minster, Melanie Donnelly Row 2: Laurie Glover, Eve Franklin, Juanita McGregor, Tonia Marine, Sharon Hovey, Dorothy Corlan, Cathy Caniparoli, Susan Luparell, Susan Raph

Homecoming Festivities

Dunk the Dean:
Dean Lea Acord takes the Homecoming spirit plunge by volunteering at the dunking booth.

Long hours of meetings, curriculum changes and strategic planning, our CON faculty was still smiling towards the end of a three-day faculty meeting.

Hard at Work

Deb Kern’s Nursing 562 class.

Standing: Faculty member Lillian Helwick.

Sitting: Graduate Students Judy Neal, Tonia Marine (faculty member in student role), and Erin Mullenberg.

All Smiles
Alumni Updates

Jolene Anderson (BSN ’00) is currently a nurse at St. James Healthcare in Butte, Montana. She works with pediatric, oncology, and ortho patients. She and her husband recently welcomed Makenna Jo, their 6 lb 10 oz baby girl, into their home.

Sharon Branson (BSN ’65) has been working as an RN for forty years. She and her husband recently celebrated their 38-year wedding anniversary. Currently, they live in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, where she is working for the Deaconess Hospital in the Home Care Department and has been doing so for eight years.

Congratulations to Careen Byerly ’00 on her marriage to Brad McMann in September 2001.

Congratulations to Brookie Clayton ’00 on her marriage to Brian Sullivan in July 2001.

Colette M. Fish, 1998 grad, has recently relocated to Las Vegas from Oahu.

Patrick J. Fitzpatrick, after graduating in 1997, began working as a staff nurse at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, Montana. He was commissioned as a Nurse Corps Officer in the Naval Reserve in 1998. In 1999 he applied for, and was selected for appointment to, active duty in the US Navy. After spending six weeks at officer indoctrination school in Newport, RI, he began duty in the Emergency department at Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington. He was commissioned as a Nurse Corps Officer in the Naval Reserve in 1998. In 1999 he applied for, and was selected for appointment to, active duty in the US Navy. After spending six weeks at officer indoctrination school in Newport, RI, he began duty in the Emergency department at Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington.

Congratulations to Jocelyn Gregor ’00 on her marriage to Christopher Bloomgren in July 2001.

If you would like to be featured in the Alumni Update section of our next issue, please contact Colleen Schwanke cschwanke@montana.edu or 406-994-2710.

Student Updates

Congratulations to Jodi Groot in her success of passing her qualifying exam for a PhD in Nursing from OHSU. Additionally, she will be receiving an award for her dissertation student in the area of residential psychiatric treatment for children.

Congratulations to Carrie Schlepp ’02 on her marriage to Andre Etcheberry in December 2001.

The Nursing Careers of Six Graduates: Like Father, Like Daughter

By Colleen Schwanke

“Being a nurse is more than a career or an occupation. It is a journey.” Dean Lea Acord recently reflected on her many job changes in her over 30-year career as a nurse. Not only does nursing provide vast opportunities, but it also attracts a wide variety of individuals to the profession. From 1975–2001, the careers and educational experiences of six MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing graduates have changed dramatically. What is unique about these graduates? They are father/daughter pairs who not only received the same baccalaureate degrees, but also had the opportunity during their schooling and their careers to work with Professor Sharon Hovey, faculty member of the College of Nursing for twenty years and Great Falls Campus Director for the past seven and a half years. Sharon, who recently retired from the College of Nursing in December 2001, was pleased to have worked with these nurses.

“How often during one’s career do you have the opportunity to influence the education of one, let alone three father/daughter pairs?” Nationally board certified in family child nursing and administration, Hovey also found it intriguing that these men have practiced their profession in the Great Falls community for approximately twenty years and that these three daughters are their father’s eldest child—an amazing story! These six graduates shared their stories with the College of Nursing, from their decisions to become a nurse, to their first jobs, to their career paths and changes, to their thoughts on the current nursing shortage.

“It takes a special personality to be a nurse.” Bill Helgeson (’75) knows what he is talking about. Since his graduation almost 30 years ago, his nursing degree has taken him down several career paths. Originally interested in Physical Therapy, he then began working as a staff nurse at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, Montana. He works with pediatric, oncology, and ortho patients. She and her husband recently welcomed Makenna Jo, their 6 lb 10 oz baby girl, into their home.

Please help us find our lost alums!

If you have any information on the following alums, please contact Colleen Schwanke (cschwanke@montana.edu or 406-994-2710).

Class of 1965:
Celine Linda Aaland, Corrine Patricia Aiken, Mil Ann Ralston Beers, Bonnie Marie Brekke, Saquio Butac, Sharon Katherine Farwell Butay, and Nada Kay Kathan Christiansen.

Class of 1970:

Class of 1975:

Class of 1980:

Class of 1985:
John Keven Beighle, Sandra Maureen Leys Bellows, Jonda J. Bink, Julie Lyn Bladuw, Janice Marie Murffitt Bratz, Mary Catherine Thurmond Brewer, Bobbi Jean Briner, and Janis Kathleen Conner.
Bill enrolled at MSU in 1970 having become interested in nursing when he unexpectedly took a leave of absence from school and spent some extended time in a hospital. After graduation, Bill spent five years working in an E.R. in Great Falls. He then moved on to a newly formed cardiology lab and in 1999 he became the supervisor of the Invasive Cardiology Services at Benefis. Since 1980, Bill’s career as a nurse has required him to be on call. In 2001, he became the Manager of Cardiology Services at Benefis and thus ended his on call days. “I miss the hands on experience, but I am just taking things one day at a time.”

Bill’s daughter Heather Helgeson Tage (’94) knew she wanted to become a nurse. “I pretty much knew all through high school that I wanted to become a nurse. I really liked that nurses play different roles such as specializing, being a clinical nurse, or working in an administrative capacity.” Heather’s first nursing position was on the medical floor at Columbus Hospital (now Benefis West) in Great Falls. In 1997, after the merging of the Great Falls’ hospitals, Tage began working for a private practice. “I like the long-term relationships I have with the patients and the continuity of care.” Heather believes her experience at the MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing was challenging and provided future opportunities for her. “I am thankful I went to MSU because I have a broad basis of knowledge, and it definitely opened more windows of opportunity for me.” As far as what her future in nursing may bring, she is still unsure. “I may go to graduate school, although I should have listened to Sharon Hovey who told me not to wait!”

“The nursing profession has changed a lot,” Jim Kessler (’78) has also held a variety of nursing positions since he received his baccalaureate degree from MSU. Kessler’s career began in the military as a clinical specialist where he was a NCO charge of an ICU. Jim’s hope was to go to medical school, but because he was a diabetic, he knew he would probably not be accepted. Instead, he enrolled at MSU and after receiving his nursing degree, spent twenty-four years working in the E.R. in Great Falls. He is a PALS and ACLS nurse instructor and provider. He flew on Mercy Flight helicopter programs since its inception. He flew with Mercy Flight for thirteen years and was a supervisor of the E.R. in Great Falls during the crash that resulted in the loss of the lives of two medical control doctors, a flight nurse, and the pilot. He is currently a flight nurse on Med Flight, the fixed winged air transport.

Kessler is also a preceptor for MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing students and nurse preceptor for new ER nurses. He also teaches for EMS and EMT students in the ER. Kessler believes the way the College educates students has changed and “nursing education is much stronger now and more theory-based.”

Jim’s daughter, Tarra Kessler, was interested in Physical Therapy before she decided on a career in nursing. “I basically decided to become a nurse because my dad was a nurse. I grew up in a hospital setting and in the E.R. I liked the idea of being in control of a crisis, being able to handle any situation, and helping people. My hope is to work in an E.R. some day.” Kessler recently completed her education at the MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing in December 2001. She, too, is pleased with her education. “I am proud of the education I have received compared to other schools.” Tarra is pursuing various job opportunities. “I am definitely interested in acute care and am interested in becoming a traveling nurse.”

Randy Mee (’82) is another nursing dad whose career has guided him down several roads. His first career choice? “Pre-med, but we discussed the long term educational commitment to our family of basically starting all over at age twenty five, so I decided to focus on nursing instead.” This proved to be a wise choice for Randy, whose path has led him to his current position, COO of Benefis Healthcare in Great Falls. Randy began his career in the military, and after graduation from MSU, took a position on the medical floor at Deaconess Hospital in Great Falls. He moved on to Rehab, then coronary care, and then ICU. After becoming the Manager of the Rehab Unit, Randy worked in that capacity for three years and also went back to school to receive his MBA. Upon completion of graduate school, Randy became the Director of the Geriatric Program at the Deaconess, moved on to Restorative Services, and then became the Vice President of Corporate Services with the newly merged hospitals of Benefis Healthcare. “I think it is important for individuals in our profession to be flexible with their jobs, especially when they are right out of school. You may end up taking one job, and it could lead you into a completely different position that you never expected.” Randy’s education at the College of Nursing proved to be worthwhile. “The College of Nursing provided a wide variety of opportunity for me and the profession has been very rewarding. I had a positive experience at MSU. It is a great program with high quality instructors.”

Somewhere along the way, Randy’s daughter, Andrea Mee Gilliland (’97), was inspired. “When I was growing up, I felt like I was destined to become a nurse since both of my parents were nurses. My parents joke that I was bandaging trees at age three!” The most attractive draw for Andrea was the exposure and time nurses have with patients, more so than any other health care profession. Andrea agrees with her dad’s philosophy of trying different job options. “He encouraged me to get different experiences, and I am really glad I did.” Andrea also agrees that the MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing provided a quality educational experience. “I found the preceptorship really prepared me, and
I think that is an excellent aspect of the program.” Andrea’s first job was at Bozeman Deaconess in Medical Surgery. Since then, Andrea moved from Montana to Beaverton, Oregon, where she currently works in the Cardiology Specialties Unit at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital in Portland.

With the variety of opportunities available, why is there a nursing shortage? Jim Kessler shared his thoughts on this issue. “The low wages nurses receive and the shift work nurses are required to do are some of the reasons why I believe we have a nursing shortage.”

Tarra Kessler stated, “At first, the idea of a shortage sounded good because it meant plenty of job opportunities; however, it made me realize that nurses need to be paid more in order to avoid burn out. A shortage also means that quality of care to patients is lacking and as a nurse, I don’t want to jeopardize a patient’s health. It seems the nursing profession needs to offer more incentives to encourage people to become a nurse.”

Andrea Gilliland’s concern is, “There are more patients, but less time to be with them, and that is not the reason that any of us went into nursing. Due to the shortage, I do not have the opportunity to do thorough patient care and quality interaction with the families. The need for a broader knowledge base is increasing, and the high demands might drive nurses away. Nursing is still a great profession so it would be unfortunate if that happened.”

Bill Helgeson is not as concerned about the shortage. “This is not the first shortage I have seen in my career, and I don’t believe it will be the last. It is just a question as to when we come out of it.”

Jim Kessler summarized his experiences in the nursing profession and at MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing. “MSU–Bozeman College of Nursing graduates are well-educated and diversified. We are the jacks-of-all-trades. We do everything.”