

# Lead. Engage. Inspire.

Celebrating the School of Nursing's 60th anniversary

By Kim Laudrum

**Patrick Mahoney '02** credits his education from the School of Nursing with opening his eyes to the world around him – and opening the door to what he could do about it.

“My experiences there really changed my thinking about what was possible. It taught me that our belief systems can hold us back or they can catapult us forward,” Mahoney says.

Mahoney catapulted forward. In his first year of study as a mature student in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) program, Mahoney co-founded the McMaster Student Outreach Clinic and Getting Youth Back from the Edge. Both of these are volunteer programs providing help to the homeless. For these efforts, in 2004 he was given an Arch Award, which recognizes the contributions of young alumni. Now a Toronto public health nurse, Mahoney wrote the curriculum for the poverty and

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homeless course taught in the program.

Leadership is nurtured at McMaster and the School of Nursing is world-renowned for it. From its inception the BScN program was innovative. Its problem-based learning approach was different from other schools. Instruction is provided in small groups of 10 to 12 students participating as a team. There are few long lecture periods with hundreds of other students. But there are opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. Nursing students take classes with engineering students, for example. Lifelong relationships grow out of the camaraderie created by these small groups nurtured by their clinician tutors.

Just ask **Maureen Harmer '66**. For more than 40 years, some of her 18 classmates

reunite every few years at a cottage in Muskoka. Now a manager of Healthy Lifestyles and Youth with Public Health Services in Hamilton, Harmer says earning a BScN, rather than an RN, positioned her for career advancement. “The school taught me how to learn and to value ongoing learning,” Harmer said.

Today, McMaster collaborates with Conestoga College and Mohawk College to offer the BScN, now an entry to practice. The school introduced a graduate nursing program in 1994 offering a Masters in Science degree by thesis or by course work and a PhD by thesis. As well, registered practical nurses can study for six terms to earn a BScN degree.

“I think the school has taken a real leadership role in Canada and internationally,” Harmer adds. She credits the school's ability to attract grant money to fund leading-edge research as key to establishing its leadership role. Nurses have a significant contribution to make to shape health policy and it's essential that their voices be heard in the political arena, she said. McMaster's “research level is fabulous,” Harmer says, and that, in turn, ensures continuous improvement of both the curriculum and the resources available to students.

**Miriam Stewart '67**, scientific director of the Canadian Institute for Health Research, Institute of Gender and Health, in Edmonton, praises McMaster for producing many nurse leaders who have contributed to the advancement of best practices in nursing through published work. Of the faculty, Stewart says “they were strong women and leaders in their time, committed to the broader perspective. They created excitement in lifelong learning, encouraging us to pursue doctoral studies. They devoted their careers to mentoring others. And I am very grateful for my experiences there.”

The School's reputation attracted the attention of Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah. He formed a link with McMaster to develop a university to serve the United Arab Emirates and surrounding areas. Under the leadership of Dr. Andrea Baumann, the associate dean of Health Sciences, Nursing, McMaster provided direction and assistance in developing the University of Sharjah's College of Health Sciences.

**Kileen Tucker-Scott '74** chose the nursing



Mike Lelich

■ Clara Elman '46, a member of the first graduating class of the School of Nursing, attended the 60th anniversary celebrations held Feb. 7, 2007 in Hamilton. Stephen Lewis was the keynote speaker at the event that included a panel discussion and a dinner.

program because of its international reputation as “an innovative, trendsetting leader.” Tucker-Scott, now the director of the School of Nursing at Ryerson University, said, “Mac taught me how to think. It gave me incredible self-confidence. I was so much further ahead than any of my colleagues who came out of diploma schools,” she says of her experience. Within two years of graduating she went “from ICU staff position to a supervisory position and from that to an educator in charge of a small rural hospital.”

“Nurse leadership is even more important today than ever,” Tucker-Scott says. “Healthcare is the greatest expenditure of our [provincial] government. Nurses are in the best position to understand the needs of an incredibly diverse population. Nurse leadership is at the hospital bedside, the curbside and in the home.”

Today Tucker-Scott emulates her mentors to instill in her nursing students the passion and excitement about nursing that they instilled in her. “I envision students graduating with passion about social justice, with the skills to critique the status quo in order to transform it. That's what I learned at Mac; to get out there and change that system.” ■

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