LU-NAN Founded at Lewis

On Saturday, May 4, 2013, the Lewis University Alumni Association (LUAA) initiated its first affinity group, the Lewis University Nursing Alumni Network (LU-NAN).

Affinity groups are part of a new program instituted by the LUAA as an effort to connect alumni to the University and to each other through the channels which mean the most to them.

LU-NAN was created to “bring together all Lewis University nursing alumni to promote nursing knowledge that benefits the nursing professional and the clientele they serve and to enhance ties with Lewis University through mutually beneficial programming.”

Its goals are to provide networking, mentorships, and continuing education to all nursing alumni as well as improve collaboration among the Lewis University nursing community.

To help LU-NAN reach its goals, two committees were created. The Networking Committee, chaired by Pat McCarthy ’97, was formed to foster mentoring, networking and social events between fellow alumni and students. The Professional Development Committee, chaired by Karen Nicholson MS ’10, was created to promote continued learning among nursing professionals.

The Networking Committee will examine a mentoring program and professional networking events. The Professional Development Committee will try to supplement and improve Lewis University’s existing nursing continuing education programs.

If you would like to be join a LU-NAN committee, please contact Reggie Bustinza, Director of Alumni Relations at bustinre@lewisu.edu or (815) 588-7542.

Lewis University Nursing Alumni Network (LU-NAN) Board

President: Cheryl Portner MS ’10
Vice President: Linda Steffens ’07 MSN ’10
Networking Committee Chair: Pat McCarthy ’97
Professional Development Committee Chair: Karen Nicholson MS ’10
At-Large Board Member: Kathy Blachowski MS ’98
At-Large Board Member: Kelly Polnik ’09 ’11
At-Large Board Member: Donna Martin MS ’06

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The United States has a nursing shortage that is expected to intensify as baby boomers age and the need for health care grows. Compounding the problem is the fact that nursing colleges and universities across the country are struggling to expand enrollment levels to meet the rising demand for nursing care.

In order to meet the demand for nurses and accommodate enrollment growth, we are expanding our existing nursing facilities to enable us to grow our nursing enrollment of approximately 1,012 students, by 200 to 250 students. Additional faculty will help us retain our focus on small class sizes. In addition to investing in facility enhancements, we will also look to expand our academic programs.

The expanded nursing education facility will include:

- Three additional state-of-the-art simulation labs, for a total of six labs modeled after hospital rooms, which provide a safe, supportive environment for students to master nursing procedures and learn critical thinking skills;
- High fidelity simulated manikins that can simulate a variety of patient scenarios, allowing students to practice responding to and treating some of the high-acuity patient events that they may not see during their clinical rotations;
- A viewing room to provide an opportunity for faculty to observe student performance and provide individual feedback that will enhance learning;
- Four additional classrooms, as well as additional faculty offices; and
- Conference rooms, a student lounge and a café.

One of the hallmarks of Lewis’ nursing program is the individualized attention students receive from faculty. In the clinical setting, our student-faculty ratio is eight to one and in the classroom, it’s 24 to 1, much lower than other area universities. This provides students with high educational standards and the opportunity for real-world and personalized experience.

For more information on the nursing program, visit www.lewisu.edu. Interested in supporting the project? Contact Luigi Amendola for information regarding gifts to the expansion, nursing endowment funds, or scholarship opportunities. Luigi can be reached at 815-836-5875 or amendolu@lewisu.edu.
Increase Your Professional Opportunities

Designed for the convenience of the professional registered nurse, Lewis University’s rigorous and patient-focused master’s in nursing program is the perfect preparation to learn how to design and execute complex healthcare strategies for a rapidly changing healthcare environment, and take the next step in your career. For more information, contact Nancy Wiksten at grad@lewisu.edu or (815) 836-5610. You may also apply online or request more information at www.lewisu.edu/academics/nursing.

Nursing Education - Become a nurse educator within an academic, healthcare or community setting. Develop skills in curricular design, instructional methodology, program evaluation and educational research and become a highly marketable player within nursing education through courses such as Educational Theory and the Scholarship of Teaching, Curriculum Development and Evaluation, and Teaching Methodology and Delivery Systems.

Healthcare Systems Leadership - Lead the administration of nursing and patient care services, improving the delivery of healthcare and nursing at large. You will develop skills in finance, economics, human resources and organizational management and be prepared to help transform nursing providers for the better with courses such as Organizational Theory in Healthcare Organizations, Human Resource Management in Healthcare, and The Business of Healthcare.

Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner - Prepare to provide primary healthcare for adolescents and adults in a wide variety of settings, possessing advanced skills in patient education, health promotion, diagnostics, testing and disease prevention, gained through courses such as Applied Physiology/Pathophysiology for Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP), Adult Health Assessment for ANP, and Pharmacotherapeutics for ANP.

Adult Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist - Graduates of the CNS specialization are prepared to implement the teaching, mentoring consulting, research, management and systems improvement roles of the clinical nurse specialist.

Family Nurse Practitioner - Prepare to provide primary healthcare for infants, children, adolescents, adults and women in a wide variety of settings, with advanced skills in patient education, health promotion, diagnostics, testing and disease prevention, gained through courses such as Applied Physiology/Pathophysiology for Advanced Nursing Practice, Adult Health Assessment for Advanced Nursing Practice, Pharmacotherapeutics for Advanced Nursing Practice, and Epidemiology.

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) - Develop nurse experts into innovative leaders who will transform practice in an increasingly complex healthcare system. As a traditional DNP with a leadership focus, this program builds upon your advanced practice skills with coursework on quality improvement, evidence-based performance, and systems approaches. You will develop advanced level skills in clinical judgment, systems thinking, and accountability in the design, delivery, and evaluation of evidence based care. This program will also prepare you to use analytical methods and information technology to improve population and system outcomes considering legal, financial, ethical, and regulatory issues.

Have your bachelor’s degree in a non-nursing field? Fast-track your master’s degree with our RN to MSN program.

MSN/MBA Program - Fast-track your MBA with this dual degree MSN/MBA program.

Past & Present

In 1971, Lewis University took a major step toward the success that is celebrated today. In 1973, Lewis opened the doors for the College of Nursing, enrolling students in undergraduate nursing programs. This success continued through the years and in 1983, the institution had a record breaking 475 undergraduate students enrolled in the college.

In 2000, Lewis University took another step forward and changed the name of the College of Nursing to the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Currently, the college offers some of the most popular undergraduate and graduate degree programs to Lewis University students. The changes and updates since the institution opened the doors of the college in 1973 have not stopped. In 2009, the University cut the ribbon on a brand new addition to the college and in 2013 the institution celebrated the 40th anniversary of the College of Nursing and Health Professions.

According to Dr. Peggy Rice, Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Professions, the college has seen significant growth over the last couple of years, including the initial offering of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program. Currently, half of the 300 students currently enrolled in graduate nursing programs are enrolled in the nurse practitioner program.

The students in the College of Nursing and Health Professions are among some of the best prepared for the field.

Recently, the New Careers in Nursing Program was awarded to Lewis University by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This scholarship is awarded to universities that demonstrate excellence in preparation of students that have transitioned into nursing careers.

See more historical nursing photos online at www.alumni.lewisu.edu!
Student Nurses Association provides an opportunity to get involved early....

Student Nurses Association of Illinois is a statewide organization for current nursing students that provide opportunities for professional development, networking, and personal development. At Lewis University, the Student Nurses Association chapter is very involved on and off campus throughout the academic year. According to senior nursing student Elizabeth Jilek, who currently serves as the President of Lewis’ SNA chapter, all Lewis University undergraduate nursing students are invited to participate as members of the organization.

Since 1950, Student Nurses Association of Illinois has been supporting collegiate chapters by empowering nursing students to demonstrate a commitment to professionalism, pride, respect, and integrity for the nursing profession. Lewis University’s chapter demonstrates this commitment by providing an opportunity for students to get involved in the nursing field outside of the classroom, to broaden their experiences, and to give them more exposure to the field.

SNA currently participates in conventions and organizations for professional networking opportunities at the local, state, and national level. The students involved in this organization have an opportunity to obtain important skills that will be used throughout nursing school and when transitioning into their nursing career.

In order to get the word out to the students at Lewis University, SNA distributes newsletters throughout the semester encouraging students to get involved and to inform them of upcoming events and fundraisers. The main events sponsored by this organization are the blood drives, outreach to Ronald McDonald House charities, fundraising for the Shannon Gardner Endowed Scholarship Fund and Almost Home Kids, and support of the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life. Recently, they raised $500 for the Shannon K. Gardner Endowed Scholarship in nursing.

These events are intended to support not only the continued development of Lewis University nursing students, but to reach out to the community to support those in need. Since the introduction of the college-wide Change for Children program at Lewis University, over $100,000 has been raised that directly benefits Advocate Hope Children’s Hospital in Oak Lawn through the Lewis University Family Assistance Fund. The funds are used to assist families of hospitalized children in their greatest time of need. In the past, the funds have been used to pay for transportation to and from the hospital for children to have chemotherapy or outpatient services, medicine, clothes when being discharged, hotel rooms for families, bus passes, and airline flights to the hospital.

The students involved in the Student Nurses Association at Lewis University are also actively engaged in mentoring with their fellow students. Senior nursing students meet each year at a social event with sophomore nursing students. After the event, one senior is paired with one sophomore who then work together to help the sophomore student complete the adjustment and transition into the nursing program. Through their service both within the University and out in the community, the SNA lives out its vision of enriching the student nurse academic experience by providing community, leadership, and professional development opportunities.
Meet LU-NAN President and 2013 Alumni Achievement Award Recipient for Healthcare, Cheryl Portner

Lewis University awarded Cheryl Portner MSN ’10 with the Alumni Achievement Award in Healthcare during its Annual Alumni Awards Dinner on September 28, 2013. Portner was honored for “her continued devotion to the healthcare field and her wholehearted dedication to instilling the core values of the Lewis Mission in the next generation of nursing alumni.”

Portner earned her Master of Science (MSN) in Nursing Administration from Lewis University in 2010, receiving a certificate of academic honors for maintaining an impressive 4.0 grade point average. Currently, she is an executive at Gannett Healthcare Group, publishers of Nurse.com in print and on-line. She also provides exceptional nursing insights for Lewis students as an adjunct faculty member for the MSN Program where she is able to inspire others with the integrity she manifests as a core foundation of her life and career. As President of Lewis University Nursing Alumni Network (LU-NAN), Portner works with the University, nursing students, and alumni to continue creating extremely beneficial opportunities for area nurses.

In the past 38 years of her career, Portner has brought her considerable expertise in healthcare and nursing to Kishwaukee Community Hospital, Adventist Health System, Hinsdale Hospital, University of Chicago Medical Center, and Gannett Healthcare Group. She has served as a staff nurse, Clinical Level III, Regional Clinical Recruiter and a Nurse Recruiter.

In addition to her leadership roles, Portner has also worked diligently throughout her career on committees to better healthcare for both staff and patients, including time as a Peri-Gyne Patient Care committee member, Unit Forum Leadership Representative, Information Systems Resource Nurse, Resolve Through Sharing Grief resource nurse, Pain Resource Nurse, Certified Lactation Educator and as a Neonatal Resuscitation Program Instructor. In addition, she has served as Co-Chair for the Chicago Area Healthcare Recruiters Board of Directors, and is a member of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society for Nursing.

Currently, Portner’s position as Vice President of Staff Development and Training/Nurse Executive at Gannett Healthcare Group is a dual role in human resources and nursing. She continues to enhance her knowledge and skills base by her membership in various organizations, including the Society for Human Resource Management, the National Association of Healthcare Recruiters, the Chicago Area Healthcare Recruiters, American Organization of Nurse Executives, the Illinois Organization of Nurse Leaders and the National League for Nursing.

LinkedIn is different than other social media sites, as it focuses on the sharing of professional news. LinkedIn allows you to highlight your work background and achievements, as well as grow in your career through the networking of online career-focused groups and news pertinent to your field.

**Visit www.linkedin.com and create your account.** There is a step-by-step profile builder that they will walk you through. Post your resume, experience, awards and skills. Not sure what to say? Check the profiles of those with similar professions so you have an idea how to word yours!

**Find Connections.** Find those you have worked with in the past or currently work with and connect. Build your network base. This is a wonderful opportunity to network without having to leave your seat!

**Share Updates – But Professional Ones.** Post relevant business articles that you come across so that others in your network can benefit from the information.

**Join a LinkedIn Group – Like the Lewis Alumni Group!** There are many LinkedIn groups, such as the Lewis Alumni group. A group is an opportunity to make new connections, showcase your expertise or pose questions to other professionals in the industry, and build your network even further.

To join the Lewis Alumni Group, search “Lewis University – Students, Alumni, Faculty and Staff” under groups at www.LinkedIn.com.
SAVE THE DATE!

March 13, 2014
Chronic Pulmonary Disease Presentation
by Dr. Bharat - Continuing Education
7 p.m., Oak Brook Campus
For more information, contact Nanci Reiland-Peek at (815)836-5720 or peekna@lewisu.edu.

Future LU-NAN newsletters will be sent via e-mail, so please provide us with your most current e-mail address at alumni@lewisu.edu to ensure you continue to receiving nursing news!

Did you know...

Lewis has celebrated a 100 percent pass rate on the NCLEX exam for the past two years. In 2012, 100 percent of the Lewis University nursing students taking the NCLEX exam passed it. A record number of Lewis University students passed the exam, 117 nursing candidates took the exam at various times. Eighteen accelerated BAC/BSN graduates took the exam in August, 17 accelerated BAC/BSN graduates took the exam in May, 44 traditional BSN graduates took the exam in May and 38 traditional BSN graduates took the exam in December 2011, which factored into the NCLEX exam results for 2012. In addition, all of the masters students graduating with a nurse practitioner concentration or post masters certificate have passed their certification examination.

Nursing and aviation remain the most popular programs for undergraduate studies at Lewis, and significant gains have been noted in science, technology, engineering and mathematics enrollment.

During the 2012-2013 school year, Lewis University’s WLRA Radio and College of Nursing and Health Professions undergraduate nursing students raised $15,000 for the Lewis University Family Assistance Fund Advocate Hope Children’s Hospital in Oak Lawn and Park Ridge.

Lewis nursing students are providing vital educational services to the community. In 2013, parents, coaches and athletes at Gardner South Wilmington High School received a lesson on Post-Concussion Syndrome from graduate nursing students. As part of a practicum, the nursing students shared information about its diagnosis and treatment.

Lewis University nursing students recently assisted adult residents with community health needs at Heritage Woods of Bolingbrook as part of the Friendly Visitor program, where students were paired up with residents to assist them with a healthcare concern over the course of at least five visits.

Nursing students recently volunteered with Young Hearts for Life to perform EKG screenings for Neuqua Valley High School students. YH4L is a cardiac screening program that identifies high school and college students at risk for sudden cardiac death. For more news about the nursing program, visit www.lewisu.edu.