

FOUNDATION FOCUS

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE FOUNDATION NEWS

SUMMER | 2024

Special Nursing Edition

Our Health Depends on Them

From Emergencies to Routine Care, Nurses Are Needed Now

P.12

ALSO INSIDE

**Scholarship Luncheon
Celebration** P.5

Why I Give P.22





Nursing graduates participated in the traditional pinning ceremony in May at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus; 89 nursing students graduated in spring 2024.

FOUNDATION FOCUS

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Foundation Focus is published twice annually by the Montgomery College Foundation and is available in print and online. To request a copy, contact the Montgomery College Foundation Office.

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Established in 1982, the Montgomery College Foundation is a 501(c)(3) institutionally related foundation and charitable organization governed by business, alumni, philanthropic, and community leaders. The Foundation's mission is to provide critical financial and nonfinancial resources in advancing the Montgomery College mission to transform student lives and enrich the diverse communities it serves.

On the Cover: Lauren Blitz Geiling '23, critical care nurse at Suburban Hospital. Cover design by Joe Weyman.



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CONTENTS

FOUNDATION FOCUS | SUMMER 2024



4 From the Chair

5 News and Events

8 Executive Perspective

12 **OUR HEALTH DEPENDS ON THEM**

From Emergencies to Routine Care, Nurses Are Needed Now

22 Why I Give

23 Student Spotlight

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The Impact of Athletics



Mary Pat Alcus

“For our student-athletes, working while taking classes, training, and competing ... simply isn’t an option.”

In my family, sports are huge. Whether we are watching or playing them, we share a love of athletics. We especially enjoy college sports and appreciate the joy and school pride they instill, as well as the important life lessons they provide. Whether it’s the value of sportsmanship, leadership skills, or time management—all of which apply as much to real life as they do to athletics—sports have a big impact on student-athletes as well as on the institution they represent.

For nearly 80 years, Montgomery College has enjoyed a history of athletic success, winning 70 conference championships, 50 regional championships, five national championships and fielding nearly 400 NJCAA All-American athletes. To-date, Raptors have made 107 national appearances. Currently, we have 150 student athletes proudly wearing the Raptor uniform.

Most people familiar with the College know that the majority of our students work while attending MC. For our student-athletes, working while taking classes, training, and competing in their chosen sport simply isn’t an option.

This is why athletic scholarships are so important.

It may surprise many to learn of the precarious financial situations that plague many student-athletes. Without a scholarship that includes a stipend, our student-athletes are often one financial crisis away from dropping out of college even though they have the drive, discipline, and focus to go the distance and complete their degree.

My husband, Darren, and I are proud to have established the College’s first endowed athletic scholarship. It is our hope that others who share our love of sports will join us. Go Raptors!

▶▶ Trivia

Name the Magruder High School alum, who began his college career at MC before transferring to Georgetown University. A first-round draft pick of the Detroit Pistons, he was later drafted by the Detroit Pistons and then played for the Toronto Raptors, the Chicago Bulls, and, finally, the New York Knicks.

He is also, by the way, a proud MC scholarship donor!



Cheers to MCF Donors— and the Scholars They Support



MC Foundation donors and scholarship recipients gathered for the annual **Scholarship Luncheon** in March. Carlos Scott, a Presidential Scholars Program participant who graduated MC this spring, received thunderous applause for his message of hope, perseverance, and appreciation.

“Playing to my strengths and accepting the call to action is how I became involved in the Presidential Scholars Program. I saw a program focused on building students up from their struggles and taking care of students holistically to reach a higher sense of self,” Scott said.

Angela Graham, president and CEO of Quality Biological, and Scott Royal, president and CEO of Westat, encouraged others to support the Presidential Scholars Program, which is open to all students and works to increase the representation of African American men in high-wage, high-demand careers.

“This partnership is not merely an act of philanthropy,” Royal said, “It is a testament to our belief in the power of education to

unlock doors of opportunity and pave the way for success for all students.” Graham said: “The Presidential Scholars Program is not just about academic achievement, it is about intentional and deliberate action, dismantling barriers, and most of all, it is about realizing dreams.”

Appreciation was also central to remarks by our student emcees, Esmeralda Quenem and Joshua Hayes, who both served as student directors on the MC Foundation Board. Quenem came to the U.S. in 2021 to study biological sciences; her end goal is a career in medicine. Hayes, a computer science major, transitioned from homelessness to honor student.

Left: Carlos Scott, Presidential Scholars Program participant and new MC alumnus; Top: Longview ACES Pathway Scholarship recipients with scholarship founders Seth Goldman and Julie Farkas (back row, fifth and sixth from left); Bottom, center (left to right): Scott Royal, president and CEO, Westat, Bill Hard, MC Foundation director, and student Joshua Hayes; Bottom, right: Angela Graham, president and CEO, Quality Biological Inc.

MBI at 25



In 1999 Gordon J. and Marilyn S. Macklin made history with their \$1.26 million donation to the College. It was the largest gift to a two-year college in Maryland history, and it established the **Macklin Business Institute** at Montgomery College. Twenty-five years later, the MBI community—alumni, current students, faculty, and Macklin family members—came together to celebrate the program’s success and the Macklin’s legacy at a reception held last October.

“We honor Gordon and Marilyn Macklin and their vision of what they intended for MC students,” said Steve Lang, MBI director. “Our MBI alumni all say the program changed their lives. We’ve had students transfer to top business schools directly from Montgomery College, and many continue their education at top graduate programs, including the Harvard MBA program.”

To date, Gordon and Marilyn Macklin Foundation donations to the College total \$5.3 million, including \$1.22 million to establish the Macklin Business Institute Finance Lab. Gordon Macklin was the first president and CEO of NASDAQ from 1971 to 1987. Marilyn Macklin was an alumna of Montgomery College. Both are deceased.



“MBI always challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and try new projects, try new experiences.”

When I moved to the United States, my resume was a blank page, and within the two years I was involved at MC and MBI, I was able to not only to fill it out, but I had a hard time choosing which activities to put on there, which is amazing.”

—Dena Bassiri '19

(Pictured, left to right) Don Dawn, Gordon Macklin III, Lisa Stargel, and Gary Macklin.

Parents' Lifelong Learning Inspires Second-Generation Support



“Walking through the halls of the Library of Congress has been a surreal experience. The distance I have traveled to be in this position is too far to comprehend. I will be forever grateful to Erica Webber and her family for their generosity. I feel proud to represent Montgomery College as a Paul Peck Humanities Institute Honors intern.”

**—Joshua Hayes,
Library of Congress Intern**

Adrian and Arthur Webber’s love for learning never dimmed with age. Throughout their lives, they sought knowledge and new experiences. After retiring from careers, the Webbers enrolled at Montgomery College, where they explored courses in Chinese, sculpture, photography, and countless other topics.

“My mom and dad had a lifelong love of learning,” says Erica Webber, Montgomery College Foundation vice chair. “They felt that taking courses at Montgomery College stimulated their minds. They also felt that interacting with younger students kept them feeling young. Dad took great pride in the small roles he had in several theatre department musicals. We still have photos they both submitted for photography class decorating our home.”

The Webbers’ appreciation for MC opportunities continues to be recognized by Erica and her two brothers, Neil and Jeffrey. Following the passing of their parents, the siblings worked through the Webber Family Foundation to establish the Adrian and Arthur Webber Memorial Scholarship Fund. Since then, they have made additional gifts that support a wide range of initiatives, including the College’s Global Humanities Institute, the Student Emergency Assistance Fund, and the Innovation Fund, which makes grants to

faculty, staff, and administrators for initiatives that enhance student success. To date, more than 150 students have benefitted from support provided by the Webber family.

Focused primarily on scholarship and wrap-around support, the Webber family’s philanthropy recently expanded to supporting paid internship experiences at the Library of Congress and similar institutions through the Paul Peck Humanities Institute.

“My parents spent their early childhood in the Bronx. They both initially attended the low-cost state school of City College of NY because they could not afford other opportunities,” Webber says. “They recognized the power of education to transform lives, so they wanted to share that opportunity with others in similar situations. They both felt a deep sense of responsibility to make a difference in the world by helping others, and they instilled this belief in my brothers and me.”

Above: Erica Webber and her husband, David Deep, with Monty, the MC mascot.

Compound Impact



Joyce Matthews

“Going back to 1982, the total contributions of the board of directors include creating 80 scholarships and donating over \$22.8 million!”

.....

We volunteer. We make donations. We serve on boards. Yet, it's not always easy to quantify the lives we are touching and the difference we are making in the world. The purpose of *Foundation Focus* is to highlight impact by telling stories about the transformational and life-altering difference philanthropy makes. We hope you are uplifted and inspired by what you read. We also hope you feel the deep appreciation we have for all levels of engagement with Montgomery College and all donations of time, talent, and treasure.

Today I will highlight the work of the Montgomery College Foundation Board, founded in 1982, and some of the impact we can measure with numbers. Our board, listed on page 3, currently has 20 directors, all of whom are deeply dedicated to the College's mission. They volunteer at our mobile markets. They help students with robing at commencement. They introduce us to community leaders who provide internships and financial support for our students. They serve as mentors, judges for RaptorTank, and guest speakers for leadership programs. They also lend their professional expertise in countless ways, including real estate and investments. Put more eloquently in the board's strategic plan, they *advance the College's mission to transform student lives and enrich the diverse community we serve.*

The Foundation Board at Montgomery College serves three key roles: “funder,” “ambassador,” and “facilitator.” This year alone, their personal monetary donations total over \$550,000. And over the full course of their engagement, this group of 19 has donated over \$5.6 million! Going back to 1982, the total contributions of the board of directors include creating 80 scholarships and donating over \$22.8 million!

Defining the impact our board has on the lives of individual students, the College as a whole, or Montgomery County as a community, is impossible to do. That said, it is clear that the members of the Montgomery College Foundation Board of Directors continue to inspire us with their dedication and generosity—and that their generosity, and its impact, comes in many forms.

MC and Adventist HealthCare Partner To Support Nursing Students



The Montgomery College Foundation and Adventist HealthCare are partnering to grow the local workforce of qualified nurses. The new partnership offers MC nursing students educational and professional opportunities that include mentoring, internships, and job shadowing of expert medical providers. The eight-year agreement will also create new scholarships for students seeking an associate of science degree in nursing.

Adventist HealthCare operates a network of three acute-care hospitals, two rehabilitation hospitals and multiple rehab outpatient centers, two cancer centers and imaging locations, as well as integrated primary, specialty and home care services in locations throughout the Washington, D.C., region. The system is recognized as a leader in the areas of heart, orthopedics, maternity, and mental health.

"We are pleased to partner with Montgomery College in offering excellent and accessible education to ensure the next generation of nurses are fully prepared to provide compassionate, high-quality care," said Terry Forde, Adventist HealthCare president and CEO.

Eligible students must be a Montgomery County or Prince George's County resident, enrolled in Montgomery College's associate of science in nursing program full time, and remain in good academic standing.



(Above) MC nursing students, pictured at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, gain hands-on skills in the on-campus labs and clinical work. Now, through the MC Foundation-Adventist HealthCare partnership, they will have even more opportunities to learn from expert health care providers.

New Faces

in Fundraising and Alumni Relations



Jonathan Strausberg
major gifts and annual
giving director

Formerly, associate director of major gifts at the ALS Association, fundraising roles at other nonprofits, plus five years at the American University Washington College of Law.



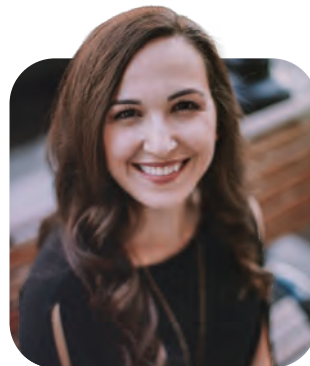
Steve Robinson '09
alumni relations director
(Office of Advancement and
Community Engagement)

Former deputy director at both the Madison House Autism Foundation and the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Montgomery County. Currently, he volunteers on the Montgomery County Government board and serves as a Washington Commanders community ambassador.



Javiera (Javi) Alarcon
annual fund manager

Previously, senior development officer at New America in Washington, D.C.; assistant vice president of strategic partnerships, National Immigration Forum (D.C.); and program officer, National Guestworker Alliance (D.C.).



Cara Santucci '16
development and alumni
relations assistant director

Formerly, director of outreach at GO Church and CEO/founder of Glüe, and MC alumni association board member who led student recruitment efforts for Montgomery College Alumni Association's mentoring program.



More than 40 donors, educational leaders, scholars, and staff gathered to celebrate the **Achieving Collegiate and Excellence (ACES)** program 10th anniversary on March 28 at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center. ACES is a collaboration among Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) designed to provide students with a seamless and supportive pathway from high school to a bachelor's degree.

"ACES is truly unique in that three major educational institutions have united to help students with the greatest needs to earn degrees and compete in our workforce," said the program's Founding Director Karen Callender-Price.

Julia Francis, an ACES alum who works at NIH as a cancer researcher, completed a master's degree in epidemiology at Columbia University. About her experience in the program, she said: "I truly believe that I wouldn't be where I am today without the guidance and moral support I received from my ACES family."

Since 2013, more than 8,300 Montgomery County Public School students have participated in ACES and received more than \$4.75 million in scholarships.



Over 2,700 students are participating in the ACES program; more than 400 have graduated from Montgomery College and/or transferred to a four-year university to complete their studies.

College Alum Talks at Biden Advisory Commission Event



Luiz Mata Lopez '23, a Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship recipient, joined a panel discussion on Advancing Education Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics, as part of President Biden's Advisory Commission. Lopez related how MC helped connect him to the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates, which led to an internship as a computational biology intern at the National Institutes of Health.

"I decided to focus my input on the importance of mentorship in the Latino youth, and how Montgomery College gets to the heart of the matter with its various support and honors programs," he said.

Lopez is currently attending the University of Maryland and participating in research opportunities. While at MC, he received an AFCEA Bethesda Chapter scholarship and a Germantown General Endowed Scholarship. MC is the only Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) in Maryland.

Diplomas and Diversity



Jenifer Tatiana Navas Morales '24

Montgomery College celebrated the class of 2024 (3,073 graduates) at its 77th annual commencement exercises on Friday, May 17, at the Rockville Campus Athletic Field.

Montgomery College President Jermaine F. Williams addressed 1,100 graduates from all three campuses plus the Workforce Development and Continuing Education program who participated in the ceremony: "You have discovered your passion. You have unlocked your potential. You will transform lives. You will enrich the community. You will change the world."

Jenifer Tatiana Navas Morales, student speaker and Montgomery College Board of Trustees Academic Achievement Award winner, emphasized the support she received at MC. Born in El Salvador, she came to the United States with her family at the age of four. A DACA recipient with limited funds, she entered the workforce after graduating from Magruder High School.

"It was not until I began taking early childhood education courses through the Workforce Development and Continuing Education Division at MC that I was introduced to the world of opportunities this institution has to offer," she said.

Navas earned a degree in early childhood education/special education. She graduated with a 4.0 grade point average and will transfer to Towson University's early childhood education program at the Universities at Shady Grove.

In addition to Navas, four graduates received the Board of Trustees Academic Excellence award: Charles David Thompson (environmental horticulture and sustainable agribusiness); Joanee Catalina Dias (criminal justice); Monica Selena Escalante Escobar (electrical engineering), and Robert Donald Walsh (apprenticeship program/automotive technician).

For highlights, visit montgomerycollege.edu/events/commencement/index.html

Snapshot: Class of 2024

This year's graduates represented 120 countries, mirroring Montgomery County's diverse population.

- 26% Hispanic
- 21% White
- 10% international
- 23% Black/African
- 16% Asian
- 4% multiracial

Nontraditional students comprised approximately one-third of the graduating class (over 35 years of age); 68% are MCPS high school graduates.

- 46% 20-24 years
- 11% 18-19 years
- 30% over 35
- 3% under 18



Montgomery College
Nursing Program

Testing



Our Health Depends on Them

From Emergencies to Routine Care, Nurses Are Needed Now

ELIZABETH A. TUCTO POMA says the nursing program—especially pharmacology and psychology courses—prepared her to care for her father before his death last year. “Throughout his illness, I understood his medications and treatment plans. I’m glad I knew what he was taking, the side effects, and how to help him be comfortable,” she says.

With just one more semester until graduation, Poma is still deciding whether to work with geriatric or pediatric patients. “When I finish at MC,” she says, “I will have learned everything in two years that nurses in four-year programs learn. I know I’ll be ready.”

For Nkechi Nzegwu, nursing is a challenging goal and a family tradition. “My mother has been a nurse for more than 40 years. Observing her dedication and work ethic in providing

excellent patient care, her clinical expertise, and commitment to continuous learning, I am motivated to strive for excellence in my own nursing practice,” she says.

The 37-year-old single mother and second-semester nursing student is focused on keeping up with program demands. “You can’t fall behind. The workload is intense, and there are times when it feels overwhelming,” Nzegwu says. She sought financial aid so she could

reduce her work hours in order to focus on her studies.

“Despite the challenges,” Nzegwu says, “I remain committed and focused because I know that every sacrifice and every hour of hard work will be worth it in the end. I know I can do it!” Right now, she is considering specializing in renal or cardiac care; she graduates in 2025. “I am driven by the desire to make a difference in people’s lives, to provide compassionate and competent care, and to contribute meaningfully to the healthcare profession,” she says.

As registered nurses (RN), Poma and Nzegwu can expect to earn \$80,000¹ a year or more working full time, based on the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics¹. They will have many employment opportunities; area hospitals, surgical centers, outpatient care, and home health centers all need nurses. Maryland-based nursing data indicates a current shortage of approximately 5,000 RNs (2021), particularly inpatient and outpatient

nurses. By 2035, that number is projected to increase to a shortage of 13,800 RNs. The demand is driven by population growth, especially escalating numbers of elderly.

To compete for nurse hires, some employers are offering sign-on bonuses from \$5,000 to \$10,000, plus offering the usual medical and retirement benefits, paid leave, and career advancement opportunities. If a nurse chooses to work on contract as a travel nurse, his or her average earnings jump to \$107,000 per year, according to ZipRecruiter.

MC Nursing Program Welcomes Career Changers

Gilberto Oblepías, in his early 40s, enrolled at MC in 2017 to study nursing. The married father of two, originally from the Philippines, works as a technician at a dialysis center in Bethesda, Md. After a decade as a computer technician in Saudi Arabia, he believes a nursing career is the right choice now.





- ▶ **Nursing students Gilberto Oblepías, Nkechi Nzegwu, and Elizabeth Tucto Poma with nursing lab manager Jennifer Knowlton in the Pam Hard Nursing Lab at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. The lab is staged and equipped like a typical hospital room; medical patients are specialized mannequins.**

“I like to educate patients I am working with,” Oblepías says. “Eventually, I want to combine my computer technology knowledge with my nursing experience. I think the combination of skills will qualify me to help run a medical or health care facility.”

After completing the prerequisite courses (chemistry, biology, etc.), he was admitted to the nursing program in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of heightened personal risk for those on the front lines of health care. Undaunted, Oblepías continued by taking online classes. Right now, he is focused on conquering the academic hurdle known as pharmacology. “It is really tough!” he says. “There is so much information to learn in one semester.”

RN Lauren Blitz Geiling '23 another

career-changer, currently works at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda. After completing a degree in communications at a four-year institution, she fulfilled her dream of working in health care by returning to the classroom. “At MC, there is a huge emphasis on being a well-rounded nurse,” she says. “You are taught to be patient-centered, not task-centered.” *(Read more about Nurse Geiling on pg. 20)*

Patient-Based Education Remains the Central Focus

Since MC established the nursing program in 1966, it has continually adapted to ensure students master current medical standards and protocols. “What never changes is the patient-based approach to teaching and practicing nursing,” says Monique Davis, associate dean of health

sciences and director of nursing. “Throughout the curriculum, students learn to recognize the patient or designee as a partner in providing compassionate and coordinated care.”

Fueled by chronic nursing shortages and a reputation for excellence, the nursing program remains one of the College’s most popular majors. “Enrollment is at a constant peak,” says Davis. “We regularly receive more than 300 applications for 128 seats. And unlike other institutions, we admit new students twice a year, in spring and fall. While we want to meet the demand, there’s only so many we can take with current resources.”

Nearing its 60th year, nursing program goals now include increasing the availability of clinical placements, boosting NCLEX pass rates (the test required for nursing graduates to

MC NURSING PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

53

scholarships for nursing students

(includes 20 established since 2020)

7

Schools that offer transfer agreements for MC nursing graduates

Top

4 MC Degree Programs

 (since 2015)

- General Studies
- Business
- Computer Science
- **Nursing**

2x

per year

nursing program admissions

\$10,304

per nursing student*

* (in-county 2023-2024 rates for tuition and fees—may increase from year to year)

70

credits

(more than most MC degree programs)

\$7,192 Tuition and Fees

\$1,500 Books and Supplies

\$270 Uniforms and Equipment

\$607 Exam-Related Costs

\$735+ Screenings, Vaccinations, and Medical Costs

300

nursing program applications

for 128 seats per semester

57 Years

(first academic year, 1966-1967)



successfully pass to be licensed as a registered nurse in the U.S.), securing additional funding through grants, and replacing faculty who have retired.

To date, the program has been awarded more than \$7.6 million in financial support, and it now leads the Maryland Clinical Simulation Resource Consortium, which establishes MC as a centralized resource center for simulation training and laboratory facilities. “Simulation provides a safe environment for learning new skills and procedures, including prioritization and teamwork. By offering simulation training, we

decrease the pressure on clinical agencies while promoting safety and enabling nursing programs to expand,” Davis says.

For students, the hands-on experience gained in simulation exercises, in classroom labs, and with actual patients in clinical practice raises their competency and their confidence. That combination translates into successful placement in the workforce.

“I say to Montgomery College: send us all the nurses that you can produce,” said Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center President Anthony Stahl, in his remarks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the College’s

new East County Education Center in April. “My chief nursing officer and our doctors say the nurses who come from Montgomery College are above the cut. They are extraordinary. From the ER to the ICU to MedSurg, their dedication is extraordinary and we are grateful,” Stahl said.

Locally, Adventist HealthCare is partnering with Montgomery College to provide opportunities for nursing students (e.g., mentoring, internships, and job shadowing) in a new agreement that also creates new scholarships (*read more about the partnership on pg. 9*). The partnership benefits the health care system by helping build the pipeline of talent that it needs, while the community benefits with the influx of qualified nurses caring for patients.

“We look forward to an even deeper relationship with the College as we continue to truly hire the incredible professionals that [MC is] producing,” said Stahl. ■

¹The median annual wage for registered nurses was \$81,220 in May 2022. Job Outlook: Employment of registered nurses is projected to grow 6% from 2022 to 2032, faster than the average for all occupations. About 193,100 openings for registered nurses are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>

▶▶ **Bill Hard, MC Foundation director, with daughter, Kate, and son, Matthew.**



Pamela Hard, RN Nursing Lab

Makes Nursing Easier

One of the program's best on-campus resources for student training is the Pamela Hard, RN Nursing Lab at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. There, students learn and practice skills such as safe medication administration, intravenous infusion, tracheostomy, and wound care. A gift from nurse Pamela Hard's family in her memory established the lab, which opened in fall 2023.

"Pam always said that she received as much from her patients as they received from her. It would give her great joy to see all of you train in this lab and use your skills to care for others," said Bill Hard, at the lab's November 3, 2023 dedication event.

"The lab mimics a hospital setting, with equipment and supplies that are relevant to local patient care facilities," says Jennifer Knowlton, MS, RN, CNE, nursing lab manager. "It also

contains mannequins and trainers that match the diversity of our community for demonstrating and practicing common nursing skills and procedures."

Knowlton, a nursing instructor with 23 years of nursing experience; 18 at bedside as a critical care RN and five years as the nursing lab manager, says first-semester students often arrive to the lab timid and nervous. "As they progress through the program, they

realize the lab is a safe place to ask questions and make mistakes. They develop confidence in their abilities and begin to assist one another in practice," she says.

Bill Hard and his family established the nursing lab at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus and also established the Pamela R. Hard Nursing Scholarship, which, to-date, has provided 13 nursing students with scholarship support.

"Each time one of our nursing students walks through the lab door, he or she will see Pam's photo and be reminded of her legacy," said Joyce Matthews, executive director, Montgomery College Foundation.

NurseSpeak

Here's what MC nursing alumni say about their work, their motivations, and the rewards of working with patients.

"For me, one of the best things about being a nurse is seeing the positive impact I have made on my patients just by listening and advocating for them. ... I've been very lucky to have worked in amazing facilities with outstanding nurses that support each other."

—Nurse Suzana Jarquin '10, RN, MSN-Ed, CNEcl, CNE, nursing professor

"My passion for nursing deepens as the profession continues to evolve. Nursing offers countless opportunities to impact lives positively, whether through saving lives, effecting change, and contributing to the growth of this remarkable science."

—Nurse Suzana Jarquin '10, RN, MSN-Ed, CNEcl, CNE, nursing professor

"One thing that stays with me from MC is acknowledging and recognizing the beauty and need for diversity. It might seem challenging to work with a diverse population, but it also creates opportunities for learning and building resilience. Inequality in health care is a prevalent issue. It can mean the difference between life and death for so many. My goal is to bridge that gap as I work with patients."

—Nurse Faith Ihegihu '23, RN, nurse residency program at MedStar Washington Hospital Center

"Now, I love working at MC ... It is a great way to give back to my community by helping students in my community and growing more future nurses, one life at a time. ... I would encourage anyone to start at MC—or come back to teach."

—Nurse Beri Kari-Fonge '05, RN, BSN, MSN-Ed, CHSE (SEL III), adjunct faculty member, alumni mentor

"I want to become a nurse to serve my community. I have a passion for helping others. Nursing also fosters my own growth, by building my compassion, empathy, and cultural competence. I am also more resilient than ever! Through intellectual stimulation Montgomery College has pushed me to critically think and adapt to many situations in caring as a nurse."

—Nikechi Nzegwu '25, current student, single mother

Nurse Honors Donor's Legacy of Patient Care



►► **Lauren Blitz Geiling '23 is a critical care nurse at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, Md. The MC nursing program provided her a pathway from communications to the health care career of her dreams.**

After graduating from James Madison University with a bachelor's degree in communication studies, **Lauren Blitz Geiling '23** pursued a career in health care. Geiling worked as a client satisfaction specialist for a home health care agency for four years, but it wasn't her dream job. At the time, it was the closest she could get to working in the health care field.

From an early age Geiling knew she wanted to be a nurse, but she was intimidated by the courses she would need to take to make it happen. "When I was at JMU, I went out of my way to avoid science classes," she says. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she had time to stop and think. "I realized that I can go my whole life not doing what I really want to do. I had an opportunity to pursue my dream," she says.

While others were learning how to bake bread during the pandemic, Geiling registered at MC for just one class: biology. "My day consisted of working full time, taking an hour break for dinner, and then logging on for class from 6 to 10 p.m.," she said. Within a year she completed the course requirements to apply for the nursing program—biology, microbiology, anatomy and physiology 1 and 2.

After graduating in May 2023, Geiling began working as a critical

care nurse at Suburban Hospital under the direction of a preceptor, a nurse who mentors, monitors, teaches, and provides feedback for student nurses in the workplace. "I feel so well equipped for real-life scenarios," Geiling says. "I apply what I learned at MC every day. The knowledge I have is directly applicable to the job I am doing now."

Geiling received the Janice Roberts Saunders Scholarship, named for a nurse who died tragically. The scholarship support helps defray the cost of registering for classes and made it possible for Geiling to enroll in the nursing program.

"If I could talk to Janice Roberts Saunders' son, Colin, I would tell him that I am keeping his mother's legacy alive through my work. The greatest gift to me is this scholarship, and that's the least I can do to give back to her and her family," she says.

Then

- ▶▶ From its first academic year, 1966–1967, through today, the program has graduated 2,574 nurses. Nearing 60, the program is stronger than ever thanks to caring faculty who are nursing experts, a curriculum that continually evolves to ensure instruction remains current, and donors who ensure that aspiring students are able to pursue their dream of becoming working professionals.



Now

- ▶▶ In January 2004, the nursing program moved into the Health Sciences Center, a 98,000-square-foot facility, which was part of the \$90-million expansion to the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. It houses the Helen A. Statts Nursing Center, named after the program's first director, among other health science programs, and a community clinic operated by Holy Cross Hospital.



WHY I GIVE

“When others turned their backs on him, Montgomery College helped [Jonathan] open his wings and fly high.”

**CRISTINA RABADÁN-DIEHL
AND MICHAEL DIEHL**
MONTGOMERY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION DONORS



Jonathan Diehl

A bright smile and a kind heart are what first comes to mind when we think about our son, Jonathan. He grew up in Bethesda in a stable, educated, and warm family. He participated in sports and attended MCPS. While Jonathan's dyslexia impacted his academic performance, his intellect and resilience played in his favor. But with time he became unseen by his peers, his teachers, and the system. Judgment, disappointment, and insecurity followed him, until he discovered Montgomery College.

The day Jonathan registered for classes, he appeared taller, and his smile was brighter. He chose construction management, became the vice-president of the Student Construction Association, and graduated in 2016. He transferred to the Universities at Shady Grove to pursue

his bachelor's degree. When others turned their backs on him, Montgomery College helped him open his wings and fly high.

When Jonathan died unexpectedly in June 2019, we knew that his dream of helping others was now in our hands. The Jonathan Diehl Scholarship supports students pursuing a career in construction management. When we receive letters from his scholarship recipients, we feel Jonathan is smiling down on us because his scholarship is about making dreams come true and giving hope.

We give to ensure that other students will have the same opportunities our son Jonathan had. We hope you will join us.

**CRISTINA RABADÁN-DIEHL
AND MICHAEL DIEHL**

►► **MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE:** Join others like Christina and Michael who support Montgomery College as donors by contacting Joyce Matthews at joyce.matthews@montgomerycollege.edu or 240-687-0654.

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montgomerycollege.edu/give

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MC student Barbara Canales Diaz received the American Association of University Women (AAUW)-Bethesda Chevy Chase Scholarship. She is working toward transfer to a four-year institution and, ultimately, working in health care.

Dear Montgomery College,

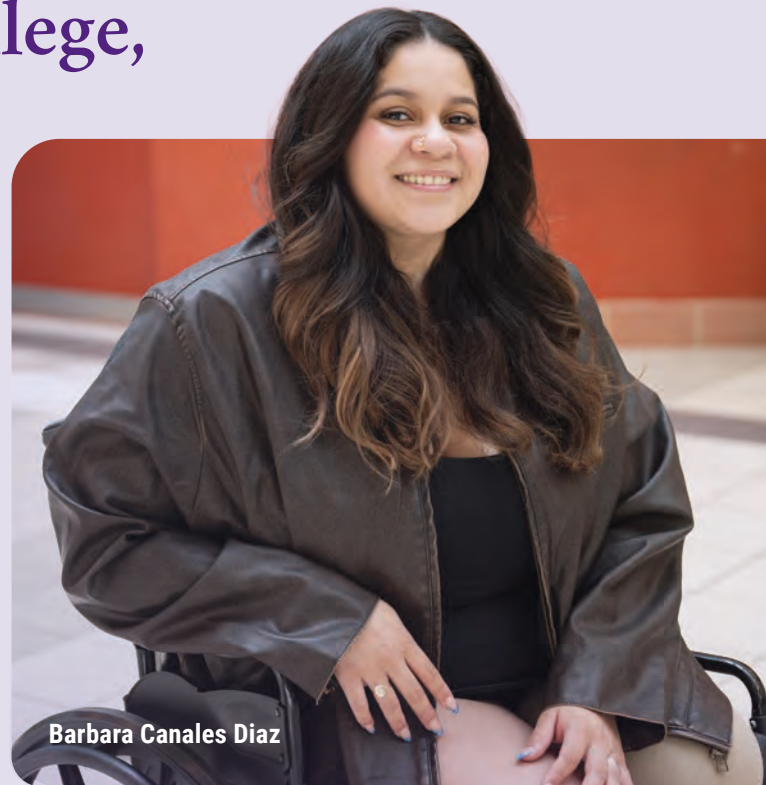
"I grew up in White Oak (Silver Spring). I received my high school diploma from James H. Blake High School. When I was a first-year student in high school, I did not know which college I wanted to attend, but I did know that I wanted to have a medical career. As a first-generation student with immigrant parents, graduating with a bachelor's degree has always been a goal in our family, but we knew that it was a financial challenge.

I am currently in my last semester at Montgomery College, and through the help of faculty, my professors, peers, and coworkers, I now know that I want to pursue a nursing degree to become a nurse anesthetist. I plan to transfer to either the University of Maryland at USG or Towson University to study nursing. I am more than honored and grateful to be a recipient of this scholarship, since I serve the Chevy Chase community by working as a patient care technician at the Chevy Chase Endoscopy Center.

*"Thank you so much
for your generosity, I will not
let you down."*

I help nurses who work with patients in recovery after a colonoscopy or upper endoscopy procedure. My next goal is to work in the procedure room as a GI technician or in the hospital as an emergency room technician.

My best memories at MC are the STEM Conference at Anne Arundel Community College and joining the Rockville Campus Student Government Association. I reached out of my comfort



Barbara Canales Diaz

zone to better myself as a student. As the secretary for the SGA, I advocated for affordable tuition for Montgomery College students and for the renovation of the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Science Center.

I will forever recommend MC as a stepping stone in a person's education because I have felt nothing but support from everyone in my educational journey. Thank you so much for your generosity, I will not let you down."

*Sincerely,
Barbara Canales Diaz*

Share Your MC Success Story



Did you receive a scholarship that impacted your education and your life?

Did you receive emergency funding that kept you at MC and helped you succeed? Or are you a donor whose gift has made an impact on a student's life? Please email us at MCStory@montgomerycollege.edu and help us spread the word and inspire others.