By Christi Richardson-Zboralski

Vianey Hernandez-Cortes, currently a student in the Accelerated Baccalaureate program on the Portland campus, knows a thing or two about persistence. She hails from the coastal town of Nayarit, Mexico and arrived in the U.S. with her parents when she was six. Her family went through the process of becoming U.S. citizens, but the rules are convoluted. At 24 she finally became a U.S. Citizen.

Hernandez-Cortes credits her father for teaching her compassion and perseverance. Initially, her college plans were delayed due to life circumstances. They may not have been the same nationality, but she wasn’t satisfied.

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By the Numbers

1st Oregon state ranking for percentage of children breastfed for first six months
24th Oregon state ranking for percentage of cigarette packs sold per capita
40th Oregon state ranking for percentage of firearm dealer licenses
48th Oregon state ranking for percentage of asthma-related hospitalizations

Tara Robertson is currently enrolled in the OHSU School of Nursing BS with a major in Nursing program, on the Portland campus, with an anticipated graduation date in 2017. She left her role managing food services for a non-profit organization to pursue nursing school, and hopes to continue working with underserved populations after graduation, either through her job or through volunteer work.

Tara has joined the School of Nursing Alumni Association because she is excited to be in such an education-focused environment and plans to continue her relationship with OHSU. She also values her academic experience and she is excited to connect with others who feel the same.

The Council continues to seek alumni who are interested in participating. Please call 503-552-0667 for information.

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By Lee Lewis-Husk

Student rides-along with the fire department started as a way to learn about the Buckwood neighborhood in Gresham. But after several groups of OHSU nursing students completed a 10-week population health clinical with the Gresham Fire and Emergency Services, they found themselves on something bigger, something that could potentially save lives, dollars and free up firefighters for high priority incidents.

“The students recognized that a significant number of calls were for things that weren’t true emergencies,” says Captain Jay Cross, head of the fire department’s EMS program. “When people call 911, it’s often because they’re waiting too long to get care for a chronic condition or they have no primary care physician or believe that by calling 911, they’ll go to the emergency room and be seen by a physician faster than if they make an appointment.”

He notes that it costs the system – mostly fire departments and hospitals – about $7,000 for every emergency response that ends up with the client going to the ER.

Sherry Archer, R.N., M.S.N., clinical instructor for the course, says the students agreed to “step up and take responsibility for helping.” The students discovered that 80 percent of calls for medical assistance were non-emergent. Except for a couple of cities where paramedics or social workers follow up with clients referred by the local fire department, the students could find no other similar program involving nurses or nursing students.

They proposed a pilot project, Gresham CARES (Community Assistance Response) whereby the fire department and nursing students could roll for a home visit. “The student will phone the person and say, ‘The fire department was at your house on such a date and recognized that you have more needs than they could address. We’re nursing students and wondered whether we can make a home visit,’” Archer explains.

Tonia White, R.N., and one of the students involved in creating Gresham CARES, says “there was an overwhelming positive response to the idea.”

Now a graduate of OHSU, White is volunteering with the Gresham Fire Department until she finds a full-time job.

“Students get education by setting the ploe a little deeper to see what’s going on in that patient’s life,” says Captain Cross. “They maybe spend an hour helping these people navigate their health care in general. Resource-wise, everyone wins.”

“One of the things I really love about this program is that it’s being developed and engineered by the students,” Cross continued. “It’s a very organic process, and we are learning as we go.” In 2014, the Gresham fire department gave the nursing school the 2014 Community Service Award in recognition of its continued efforts to reach out to the community in an innovative fashion.

Instructor Archer says that one of the pilot project’s goals is to track interventions and the future use of both primary care and EMS by individuals the students work with to measure outcomes.

The vision for the future is to incorporate more interprofessional disciplines, such as pharmacy, social work and mental health practitioners, according to Archer, who says the project lays the foundation for other schools to jump in.

“What I’ve learned is there are simple, small needs that can make a vast change in someone’s life,” White says. “This is an exciting program for students to gain exposure to real life situations, and we’re actually making a difference to our patients.”

Above: Tonia White, R.N. Below: SoN students with Captain Jay Cross (third from the right), SoN faculty member Sherry Archer (second from the right) and Gresham firefighters.

DNP student gets firsthand experience on Oregon’s frontier

By Lee Lewis-Husk

The water rug in the camper van where Jill Testerman, DNP, slept while doing a preceptorship at the North Lake Clinic in Christmas Valley froze solid. “November was cold,” she says, recalling the experience with a laugh. A former biotechnician and ranger with the National Park Service at Mount Ranier, the 36-year-old native of Anacortes, Wash., thought nothing of it.

“…the experience made me more aware of the challenges of achieving optimal health in a rural area. The clinic is a beautiful example of what providers in a disadvantaged rural community can offer.”

– Jill Testerman, F.N.P.

Now in the third and final year of a doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree, Testerman found the clinic remote Lake County to be the perfect spot for witnessing health care on Oregon’s frontier. She spent 200 hours shadowing and caring for patients with Pat Widenoja, F.N.P., and a recent graduate of OHSU’s DNP program.

Christmas Valley is 10 miles in various directions from Bend, Klamath Falls, Burns and Lakeview. Unemployment is 11 percent, and residents have below-average health due to socioeconomic factors. Most of the people are financially strapped and have other medical costs under the Oregon Health Plan, according to Testerman.

The clinic is staffed by Widenoja and a physician assistant and sees complaints common in a primary care practice – diabetes, chronic pain, hypertension, acute back pain and wound infections, as well as well-patient exams.

A couple of experiences stood out to Testerman. “I discovered that new ways to serve patients is to move beyond the walls of the clinic,” she says. She went along with the clinic’s RN on a home visit to “validate,” people who live off the grid and under the radar. The patient they visited had suffered a stroke and had difficulty accessing his home in a wheel chair from a dirt road and yard.

The RN was there to check his medicines, but Testerman says she learned so much more about the patient than just the medicine he was on.

Another time, Widenoja was getting ready to teach a diabetes education class when one of her students fell, cutting her eyebrow and bruising her shoulder. “Pat told me to teach the class while she went to get the woman patched up,” Testerman says. Although she never taught a diabetes class before, “I did my best, until Pat returned 20 minutes later. All in a day’s work!”

When asked about future plans, Testerman concedes that working in a really small place like Christmas Valley would be difficult as a new provider. “But the experience made me more aware of the challenges of achieving optimal health in a rural area. The clinic is a beautiful example of what providers in a disadvantaged rural community can offer,” she says.

Above: Jill Testerman and a patient in front of the Christmas Valley Health Center.

DrawnTogether: A Show-and-Tell Healthcare Tool for Kids

By Barbara Shuetze

It isn’t always easy to integrate a patient’s voice into the health care experience, particularly when that patient is a child.

“Eliciting children’s voices is my passion,” says Martha (Marti) Driessnack, Ph.D., FNP, associate professor. “It’s important to involve children early and often in their own health care and my research has focused on developing child-sensitive self-report tools to engage and empower children.”

Children age 5 to 10 often have trouble describing their symptoms to their health care providers.

To increase the quality and quantity of children’s communications, Driessnack developed a technique called the Draw-and-Tell Conversation (DTC), where children first draw their symptoms on paper (or a tablet) and then describe it to their health care provider or parent. “When children have the opportunity to draw first, they tell you more, it’s more accurate and the information is more actionable,” says Driessnack.

Drawing on interprofessional collaboration

Dana Widenoja, an OHSU biomedical informatics Ph.D. student brought both a nursing and informatics perspective to the team. She notes, “The DrawnTogether mobile app is able to capture and curate children’s drawings and accompanying narratives and improves on capturing and storing paper drawings.” Benefits include the ability to:
• Include child generated information in the EHR
• Enable providers to understand the perspectives of, and more effectively communicate with children
• Provide simplified electronic storage
• Help providers retrieve information at a future point in time
• Be used over distances

The collaboration between the School of Nursing and the OHSU biomedical informatics graduate program brought together professionals with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. “It was the combination of teamwork, enabled by technology and informed by health care that led to the success of DrawnTogether,” notes Woodcock.

Currently, Driessnack and Woodcock are writing a research grant to conduct a practice-based field study. “Thanks to the prototype, we’re a step closer to getting DrawnTogether into everyday use in clinical settings,” says Driessnack.

“In Informatics, we are always looking for problems to solve and we work nurses, nurse practitioners and others to reach out (woodcocks@ohsu.edu) if they encounter challenges that may have technological components,” says Woodcock.

Visit http://drawntogether.cooperativework.com/ to learn more about DrawnTogether.

DrawnTogether mobile app strives to engage children in the health care process.

School of Nursing Connections