

## **The Ralph Knox Foundation provides support to many single parents attending the Maurine Church Coburn School of Nursing at Monterey Peninsula College**

For nursing student Crystal, the rent and utilities added up to more than her paycheck and childcare bills were mounting. The horizon was looking bleak for her until she received a scholarship from the Ralph Knox Foundation, which proved to be the lifeline to keep her dream of becoming a registered nurse alive.

Crystal is not alone. Over the years over one hundred of Monterey Peninsula College Maurine Church Coburn School of Nursing students, mostly single mothers, have benefitted from financial support from the Knox Foundation.

The demands of the classroom and full time commitment facing MPC nursing students is a daunting task by itself, but adding the financial stress of trying to make ends meet makes the undertaking almost unfathomable. The Knox Foundation recognizes these challenges. Since 2004, their Board has made providing financial support to MPC nursing students a top priority. To date, the Knox Foundation has donated over \$400,000.00 in scholarships to more than 100 students in the MPC nursing program.

For Bill Patterson, one of the Knox Foundation board members, the support they provide to students especially touches his heartstrings. Patterson's mother raised three boys as a single parent on welfare. He knows firsthand the struggles financial challenges can present a family. At the age of 55 his mother went back to school to become a registered nurse. Because of her accomplishments, the nursing profession is dear to his heart. Using her example as his inspiration, Patterson wanted to find a way to give back to the community.

As fate would have it, MPC nursing instructor Eileen LaMothe MSN, RN and Patterson met when their children were attending the same elementary school. LaMothe had created an "Adopt-a-Nursing-Student-and-Family-for-the-Holidays" program in 1989 with the idea to gather donations from the community for holiday food boxes with age appropriate toys for needy nursing students and their families. Initially, LaMothe asked friends and acquaintances to

help out in any way they could. As the program grew, LaMothe's passion for the program became infectious. Individuals and families donated, elementary and high school classes combined resources, employees from Community Hospital and MPC contributed and scout troops joined in to support the holiday program with food, toys and gift certificates. Anyone who heard of the seasonal idea wanted to help. Patterson understood this need first hand and offered his support.

Along the way Ralph Knox and Bill Patterson's paths crossed. Knox was a successful real estate investor and in an effort to give back to the community in which he and his wife lived, established the Ralph Knox Foundation. Ralph was diagnosed with polio as a child and was paralyzed from the waist down throughout his life. As he had many health issues, he particularly valued those in the medical fields, including nursing. Patterson helped to set up on the Knox Foundation and served on the Board. From that position, and knowing of the needs facing nursing students and the history and growth of the Adopt-a-Nursing-Student-Program, the match between the Knox Foundation and the MPC nursing school was a natural. The seed was planted. During the past 14 years, many nursing students have benefitted from the Knox Foundation funds and the collective vision shared between Knox and Patterson.

The School of Nursing scholarship program is coordinated by LaMothe. Annually, LaMothe confidentially surveys each student to determine those eligible for scholarships including Knox Foundation scholarships. The financial struggles students report vary: rent, cost of childcare, gas and other program related expenses including tuition, texts, uniform scrubs, mandatory testing fees and equipment. Some students, including some with families, have moved back with parents to make ends meet.

Once the list of qualified students is identified, completed applications are presented to the trustees of the Knox Foundation. Recipients usually receive a \$2,000 scholarship each year of eligibility during the two year nursing program. 100% of those recommended by LaMothe have been funded through the Foundation's generosity.

The goal for the Knox Foundation and Patterson was to create a program that would provide support to nursing students so that once they became successful in their careers they would be in a position to give back or "pay it forward" to keep the scholarship program going. Recipients are reminded to give back to the community by volunteering their services while still in nursing school. Recent examples of their commitment of giving back include the Big Sur Marathon and Big Sur Half Marathon events. The Big Sur Marathon is a charitable organization that depends on volunteers to manage their events. Of the 32 students enrolled in the first year of the MPC nursing program, 28 volunteered to help staff the first aid stations and medical tents this year. Nursing students also volunteer at the Rotacare Clinic, the MPC Health Fair, and other Community Outreach events.

This lesson is not lost on any of the Knox scholarship recipients. 2015 graduate, Amanda Carlile donated \$1000.00 to the Ralph Knox scholarship fund at Monterey Peninsula College. "My donation was more than money; it was a gift symbolic of my gratitude for the support and generosity the Knox Foundation showed me...I was a single parent of two boys and working full time to support the three of us...once I started working as a nurse I started to save money knowing one day I was going to give back...and keep the support available for single mothers like myself looking for opportunities to live out their dreams. Thank you, Eileen for believing in me and for advocating for women and men like myself. You are part of the backbone that keeps MCCSN strong and successful and I will be forever grateful." In recognition of her donation, Amanda's name will be added to **The Knox Foundation Honors Maurine Church Coburn School of Nursing Alumni "Pay It Forward" Donors** plaque. **"Creating the environment to teach those who receive, the importance of giving back-thereby completing the Circle of Giving."**

The Knox Foundation recognizes the high professional caliber of the graduates from Maurine Church Coburn School of Nursing and their commitment to the communities where they live. It is their belief, that the individuals receiving support ultimately serve the nursing profession at the highest professional standard and become productive leaders in our community.

Eileen LaMothe MSN, RN  
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