

Northern HORIZONS

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ANSWERING
THE CALL

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EDITOR'S NOTE

My earliest memory of being in a health care setting was when I was three years old. The memory is only flashes, but I remember there was a lot of screaming (all from me, of course), and my arms and legs were being held down. I was getting stitches after falling and splitting open my nose.

It seems I spent a lot of my childhood being held down on an examining-room table. When I was a few years older, I remember being held down because I didn't want to receive a shot in my...well, I'm sure you can imagine where.

Since then, I don't think I've needed to be held down nearly as often in a doctor's office, and I'm almost positive I haven't screamed, yelled, or complained nearly as much, although my husband might argue with that for all that I put him and the night-shift nurse through during the birth of our first child.

Not all of my experiences in health care have been this traumatic. Most of them, in fact, have been quite positive. But what impresses me is how amazingly calm most doctors, dentists, nurses and other health care workers remain when faced with a head-on onslaught of fear, anger, confusion, and frustration. They keep seeing you, taking care of you, and for the most part, being genuinely glad to see you. I'm sure it comes from training, experience, and what drives many health care workers to enter the field—simply wanting to help others. Impressive regardless.

I have to wonder if doctors, dentists, nurses, laboratory technicians, and other health care workers would have entered the field if they had known in advance they would have to face screaming and otherwise cranky people like me almost every day of their careers. I imagine the majority of them would.

Even as the nation faces a critical shortage of health care workers, Northern continues to attract students to the field, graduating more students each year in nursing, clinical laboratory sciences, and pre-professional health programs.

And as you'll read in this issue, many NMU students have wanted to work in the health care field since they were very young—either having grown up with family members who were health care workers or just being positively influenced by the compassion of a health care professional.

—KW



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Florence Nightingale is one of the most prominent figures to tout the benefits of animal use in the health profession. But only now is the subject beginning to receive scientific documentation and support. Communications disorders professor Helen Kahn uses dogs to help clients in speech pathology sessions and is looking into how and why animal assisted therapy is so effective.

8 Answering the call

As the shortage for health care workers across the country grows, colleges and universities are being called upon to help fill the void. Here's how Northern is doing its part to help ease the national health care crisis.

14 Stress, adoption, and health care

When nursing professor Eileen Smit began reading up on adoption, her goal was to help her own adopted daughter through whatever challenges and adjustments might face her in her youth and beyond. Her research eventually made its way into her professional life and has resulted in a groundbreaking study that will help health care workers better care for adopted children and their families.

ON THE COVER AND ON THIS PAGE

Northern Michigan University nursing (in blue) and clinical laboratory science students (in white) from front to back: Kasey Carpenter, Rebecca Piippo, Angela Nelson, Margot Contois, Danielle Mattice, and Pete Pelletier. Photographs by Stephen Allen.