

# Donors thank a real life saver

The quick and professional actions of Northern Michigan University senior nursing student Naomi Benda were recognized with a \$75,000 gift from Cathi and John Drake to NMU's School of Nursing for the creation of a critical care simulation lab.

Last August, Benda performed lifesaving CPR and emergency first aid on Cathi Drake after she collapsed in a restaurant in Houghton, Mich., while having dinner with her husband and friends.

During May's nursing commencement pinning ceremony, Benda, who hails from Cokato, Minn., was surprised with the announcement of the Drake's gift in her honor. She was also presented with a State of Michigan Certificate of Tribute citation from Gov. Jennifer Granholm and a State of Michigan Special Tribute from the House of Representatives.

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The critical care simulation lab is located in NMU's West Science Building and emulates a room in a state-of-the-art intensive care hospital unit. It was officially opened and dedicated as the Benda-Drake Room following the pinning ceremony.

“It was a total surprise,” said an



A surprised Naomi Benda with the Drakes in the new critical care simulation lab. Their gift was revealed to her at her nursing graduation pinning ceremony in May.

emotional Benda, following a tour of the new lab. “I was bawling my eyes out. I wasn't sure when I first heard it announced what a critical care simulation lab would entail but it's a beautiful room, and it will be a great learning environment for future classes here.”

The Drakes, who are from Warren, Ohio and are retired owners of a manufacturing business, attended the pinning and room dedication and the commencement ceremony to see Benda graduate. They reside in Hancock during the summer.

“We really appreciate what Naomi did and what Northern Michigan University did in training her to handle such a situation so well. And we're hoping that this room will help train more future nurses to perform so well. That's our mission and our hope; this gift isn't about us. It's about the future

and the young people NMU is trying to educate. We want to help the university continue to provide the highest level of training in its nursing program,” said John Drake.

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“The room is great and Julie Dobson of the NMU nursing department did a wonderful job of putting it together,” added Drake.

Kerri Schuiling, associate dean of nursing, said there is a severe shortage of nurses with critical care experience.

“A simulation lab enables us to provide an educational experience for our students that helps to meet that need,” said Schuiling.



## Honoring a lifetime of support

Phyllis Maki of Marquette is just the second person in the university's 108-year history to receive the NMU President's Lifetime Achievement Award. She was honored at a dinner this spring.

"I cannot think of a single person who has given more to make this university so special. Not one," said NMU President Les Wong.

The citation recognized Maki for her tireless advocacy on behalf of her community and NMU. She has served the latter as a distinguished member and past president of the NMU Foundation Board of Trustees, an honorary alumna and—along with her husband, Carlo—

a generous contributor.

Maki's daughter, **Debbie Veiht '80 BS, '89 MAE, '04 EDS**, spoke on behalf of the family after the award presentation.

"In a way, Mom is sad that her involvement with NMU is waning," Veiht said. "Yet she knows she has left her footprint at NMU. For well over 20 years, she has given of her time, talents and treasures to this university and the community. Never once did she feel taxed handling any of the projects set before her. Looking back, Mom's leadership not only helped Northern in so many ways; it also expanded her purpose for being involved and opened the doors for her to help many others."

The award was established in 1999 to coincide with Northern's centennial celebration and was presented to former Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld.

### NEW CERTIFICATE PROGRAM LAUNCHED FROM GIFT OF COMPANY MACHINE

Northern has partnered with Ironwood Plastics on a new one-year certificate program in plastics injection technology that will be offered beginning this fall.

The company and its owners, the Stephens family, contributed a gift valued at about \$125,000 to fund student scholarships, a plastics injection machine, raw materials to operate the machine and an instructor who will teach some courses in conjunction with NMU professors.

"This program will provide graduates with the knowledge and technical skills needed for entry-level employment in the plastic injection industry as a machine operator, maintenance technician or mold technician," said Tom Meravi, professor of technology and applied sciences. "There are good jobs with sustainable incomes in the Upper Peninsula in this field, including at Ironwood Plastics."

The partnership is mutually beneficial. NMU has tailored a program that will draw more students to the university and train them on the same equipment they will encounter in the professional arena. In turn, Ironwood Plastics and similar companies will be able to maintain a qualified workforce.

"NMU already had the rudimentary phases for a great program, with the robots and other machinery related to the process," said **Scott Stephens '91 BA**, who returned to campus to demonstrate the machinery to faculty and staff. "It was just a matter of introducing our specific technology. The staff at Northern has been fantastic in making it happen."

"But this isn't just about us. There are other molding companies in the U.P. that will benefit. This is an outstanding example of business-industry and education working together to help address economic and employment issues in our region."

Graduates of the plastic injection technology program will be guaranteed an interview with Ironwood Plastics. Meravi added that all of the courses are transferable to an associate degree in manufacturing technology-industrial maintenance or to a bachelor's degree, if a student wanted to continue his or her education while working in the industry.

Another example of an NMU-business partnership is the computer numerical control technician program previously developed with Pioneer Surgical Technology.