

**December 2002**  
**A Gift from the Community**

**by Cherry Wunderlich**

This autumn, a local student's dreams of becoming a nurse are coming true, thanks to a scholarship fund created in memory of a devoted and caring nurse who grew up in Kensington.

The scholarship endowment at Montgomery College is a lasting tribute to Janice Roberts Saunders, the nurse for whom it is named. It came about through gifts from hundreds of generous individuals and businesses in Kensington, Montgomery County, Virginia, and far beyond.

"Established in love, enhanced by a community that cared," is how Janice's mother, Mary Lou Roberts, describes the scholarship fund.

She and Janice's sister, Terry Krebs, recently shared some news about the endowment, the many students it has helped over the years, and how it will continue to support nursing students at Montgomery College. Mary Lou also showed some of Janice's cross-stitch pieces and crafts on display in her Kensington home, where she has lived for nearly 50 years.

Janice Roberts Saunders graduated from the Montgomery College School of Nursing in 1983. She grew up in Kensington and attended Rock Creek Palisades Elementary School (now Rock View Elementary School), Newport Junior High School, and Einstein High School.

Janice loved nursing, her family, history, nature, and rural living. While living with her husband and young son in Virginia, she traveled each week to visit her mother, and then to do private-duty nursing in the Layhill area. In March 1993, she was murdered while on duty caring for a disabled child, who, with his mother, also lost their lives.

To honor Janice's memory and turn the family's tragedy into something good with lasting benefit, her husband Michael Saunders decided to contribute to the nursing school at Montgomery College. From his contribution came the idea of the nursing scholarship endowment. The goal of the endowment would be to fund a scholarship to cover tuition, books, and fees at the Montgomery College School of Nursing. It would continue in perpetuity.

With the help of their friend Charlotte Jurasinski, the family reached out to the community to raise the \$50,000 needed to endow the scholarship. The community responded generously. People who had never known Janice, as well as family and friends, contributed to the fund. More than 80 businesses contributed as well.

One of the memorable gifts came from the internationally known artist, P. Buckley Moss. Janice had loved Moss's cross-stitch patterns. She was working on one of the Moss designs, titled *The Parade*, the night she died.

The artist created a painting in Janice's memory. She titled it "Stitching Nurse." She donated the first 200 prints to be sold to raise funds for the endowment. On one she added the message, "For you, Janice." This print is now on display at the Montgomery College School of Nursing. Another print is on display in a doctor's office in Paris, France, because people near and far heard about and sought the special prints.

Because of this outpouring of community support, the nursing scholarship endowment became a reality in 1995.

So far, ten nursing students at Montgomery College have received scholarships from the Janice Roberts Saunders, R.N. Memorial Endowment Scholarship. The scholarship supports a second-year nursing student.

Each spring the Montgomery College School of Nursing tells its current nursing students about the award. To be eligible, the student must have demonstrated need for financial assistance, as well as a minimum grade point average of 3.0, and be a Montgomery County resident and U.S. citizen.

As told in this newsletter in 1995, Kathryn Wheately, the first scholarship recipient, had been working two jobs part-time to support her two little girls while pursuing her studies. Thanks to the full funding from the scholarship, she was able to complete her studies and become a registered nurse.

Mary Lou tells how the second recipient, Erin Fultz, said that the scholarship, together with her mother's dedicated care of her children, enabled her to complete her nursing studies.

Since then, seven other nursing students have received scholarships. This year, the scholarship winner was Shafqat Khan. In August he wrote, "I appreciate your confidence in my scholastic abilities and will strive to achieve continued excellence in pursuit of my nursing degree. I hope to apply the training received at Montgomery College to better prepare myself for the kind of service that will make a difference in the lives of those I will serve."

Today, with news headlines about the shortage of nurses throughout the country, the scholarship has particular meaning. "It helps encourage people to go into the field of nursing," says Mary Lou, adding, "It is so important to our family that her memory is there in a real, living, celebrating memorial."

"The community did this. We could never have accomplished anything without the community," Mary Lou adds. "That's what happens when people care. So many have benefited from the benevolence and compassion of the community. We would like to express our appreciation. Let our community know what coming together and love can accomplish."

#### Thank You, Scholarship Fund Donors

Individuals and businesses from the Kensington area were among the hundreds of generous donors to the Janice Roberts Saunders, R.N., Memorial Endowment. Johnson's Flower and Garden Center, Kaiser Permanente, the Kensington Business District Association, Miller's Framing, and many banks in the area contributed to the fund.