



## MEMORIAL DAY 2013 SPECIAL ISSUE

### MEMORIAL DAY: NOT JUST A DAY OFF



"Memorial Day is a time in our country to honor our fallen military: men and women that have given their lives – the ultimate sacrifice – for our country," said Dr. Leland "Rocky" Rockstraw, Assistant Dean of Simulation and Clinical and Technology Academic Operations at the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions. "Memorial Day is not just a day off; it's a day of remembrance."

Dr. Rockstraw is a veteran of the Nurse Corps and served in the military for 11 years. In his first enlistment, he spent four years as a computer operator in a weather satellite shop for the United States Air Force. He then worked part-time as a medical supply sergeant while he went to college for nursing. After obtaining his degree, Dr. Rockstraw spent six years as an officer in the Nurse Corps.

One of the skills that he brought to Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions from his experience in the military is his strong work ethic. "It teaches you to lead. When you make errors, when you fall down flat on your face, it teaches you to stand up and be accountable, take responsibility for your errors, move forward and not make the same error again," he said.

Dr. Rockstraw thinks it is important that Drexel return to the roots of Memorial Day with this year's Memorial Day primer event, DU Remembers, Will You? He believes that Memorial Day is supposed to help with the healing process as we come together to honor and reflect on the lives that were given for this country.

The Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions invites you to join us in remembering the men and women who have died while serving in the United States Military.

### ELIZABETH MEYERS '14 REFLECTS ON PATIENTS SHE CARED FOR DURING DEPLOYMENT



Elizabeth Meyers '14 is a student in Drexel's Physician Assistant program and a fifth generation member of the Air Force. "I have always had a love for the military and grew up in a 'blue' Air Force family. I have always wanted to serve my country," she said.

Meyers decided to join the military in 2006 on her 20th birthday after two years of undergraduate education at Penn State University and West Chester University. When asked why it is important to her to serve her country, Meyers said, "My family risked their lives protecting our freedom and I wanted to pay it forward and do the same." She enlisted in the Delaware Air National Guard as a ground medic and, after a few years in this role, Meyers joined the 142 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron as a flight medic. It is with this squadron that she deployed overseas and truly grew as a medical professional.

To date, Meyers has had three deployments, two of which were in combat zones. "I look forward to the day when I can go back overseas to take care of my patients," she said. Meyers' mantra is, 'If you think you have it bad, just know there is always someone else who is hurting worse than you are.' "At times when I use that phrase, I think about the men and women who I took care of," she said.

After graduation, Meyers plans on commissioning as a Physician Assistant with the 166 AW Delaware Air National Guard Medical Group and working as a civilian Physician Assistant in either Orthopedics or Emergency Medicine.

"Memorial Day is important for me because I use it as a reflection day to remember all of the patients I have taken care of, [including] those who are fully recovered, those who are permanently disabled, and those who I transported back overseas in coffins. We must never forget," she said.

Meyers concluded by saying that we too often take things for granted. For her, "joining the military is a great reminder to count your blessings and appreciate what our Forefathers have done for us. It is an honor to take part in the Force and I encourage anyone who has the desire to join to do so. It has changed my life in so many ways that I could not have gotten from anywhere else," Meyers said.

## LENDING A LISTENING EAR ON THE NIGHTSHIFT DURING VIETNAM



"The military helped me develop discipline, the joy of caring for wounded soldiers, and the importance of decorum," said Dr. Vicki Lachman, a clinical professor in the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Dr. Lachman served as a second and then as a first lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps between 1968 and 1971.

She was initially stationed at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, one of the east coast return centers for soldiers wounded in the Vietnam War. Valley Forge was a 1,000-bed hospital at the time and Dr. Lachman and the other Army nurses used golf carts to complete their rounds. Because she was low in the military officer hierarchy and a woman, Dr. Lachman spent a lot of time working the night shift. During those twilight hours, she learned the importance of listening to her patients.

"I learned about the war, as the patients would wake up with nightmares, and I would listen to their stories. I learned to never underestimate the value of your listening presence to a patient in psychological pain," she said. "This lesson served me well as I pursued my Master's degree in psychiatric nursing on the G.I. Bill later in my career."

Dr. Lachman was also struck by the knowledge and the skill of the medical corpsmen who essentially managed the Valley Forge hospital.

She was next stationed in Fort Sill, Oklahoma at an artillery base where she served as a critical care nurse. "The most important knowledge I took from that experience echoed the listening at Valley Forge," she said. "The multiple examples I have all center around my listening to the patients that saved lives."

Dr. Lachman currently serves as the Adjutant for Post 331 in Stone Harbor, New Jersey and enjoys the continued camaraderie of veterans who have served our country.

## NEW COURSE PREPARES NURSES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Lisa Aiello-Laws, an online adjunct faculty member, is currently teaching the first term of "The Unique Healthcare Needs of Veterans," a new course created to teach nursing students how to help returning veterans. Aiello-Laws worked with professor Dr. Karyn Holt to co-develop and teach the course. The course fundamentally teaches students working toward their Bachelor's degree in Nursing about veterans, their families, and what their collective needs are. As a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Joining Forces Initiative, 130 of the nation's medical and osteopathic colleges have committed to train students in treating brain injuries, PTSD and other mental health issues affecting returning service members. Over 500 nursing schools, including the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions, have committed to further educate our nation's 3 million nurses so that they are prepared to meet the unique health needs of service members, veterans and their families.

The students enrolled in the course learn about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide, depression, homelessness, and the various resources available for veterans in their transition to civilian life. There is also a section on the specific needs of military women, including an emphasis on sexual trauma.

The popularity of the new course is undeniable; "The Unique Needs of Military Veterans" reached full enrollment capacity in one registration day. Aiello-Laws says she hopes courses like these will become available to other majors, too. "I think the community is interested and of course there is a need," she said.

Professor Aiello-Laws has submitted a pledge on behalf of the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions to the Joining Forces Initiative.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM PROVIDES FREE HEALTH SCREENINGS TO VETERANS



The College of Nursing and Health Professions is partnering with the Philadelphia City Council and Veterans Advisory Commission again for the Annual Veterans Resource Fair on May 22. The fair, which will take place in the City Hall Courtyard, will include health and wellness activities and screenings as well as information about housing, employment, education and benefits available to veterans.

An interdisciplinary team from the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions will provide a mini-clinic with free screenings for blood pressure, blood glucose, eye health, body mass index, posttraumatic stress disorder and depression. Administration, faculty and students from multiple disciplines at the College will participate, including the Physician Assistant, Nursing, Creative Arts Therapies, Physical Therapy, Couple and Family Therapy, Nutrition Sciences and Behavioral Health Counseling Departments.

"I was very pleased to see the excitement generated by our students and faculty when they learned they would be participating in the Veterans Resource Fair," Assistant Dean Dr. Leland "Rocky" Rockstraw said about last year's health screenings. "Annual screening promotes early intervention and a healthy lifestyle."

## UNITED STATES NAVY CHOSE KIMBERLY OELSCHLAGER '12 TO BECOME A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT



"I have the freedom and choice to serve my country, which alone is worth defending," said Kimberly A. Oelschlager, a Physician Assistant at the Naval Branch Health Clinic in Coronado, California. "What started as an initial four year commitment is now 12 years on active duty."

Oelschlager has a long family history of service in the military. Four of her uncles served in the Army during World War II, one of whom received a Silver Star and Purple Heart for wounds received during the invasion of Normandy. Another served in the Air Force during WWII and yet another uncle served in the United States Air Force for 24 years, including during the Vietnam War. Oelschlager's father served 24 years in the Air Force and was deployed to Korea and Vietnam; her brother served five years in the Air Force. More recently, one of her cousins retired as an Air Force General after having served in Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Oelschlager lost a cousin who served in the Air Force during Operation Desert Storm. She emphasized that Memorial Day is a remembrance to honor all men and women of the Armed Forces who have died while serving.

After beginning her military career as a Navy Hospital Corpsman in 2001 just before September 11, Oelschlager was commissioned as a naval officer and worked as an Aerospace Operational Physiologist from 2003 to 2010. Her last duty station was in the Marine Aircraft group 39 at Camp Pendleton, located in San Diego, California.

She was selected by the Navy in 2010 to become a Physician Assistant and was accepted to the program at the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions, where she received her degree in 2012. Today, Oelschlager works at the Naval Branch Health Clinic in Aviation Medicine and Family Practice. She is also responsible for helping Navy Medicine to establish an aviation medicine program for Physician Assistants. "The Navy has the best training programs in the medical field for officers and the enlisted. The experience gained is invaluable," she said.

Oelschlager's experience in the United States Navy allowed her to work alongside people of diverse cultural backgrounds, personalities, and varying opinions who put them aside to work as a team toward a common goal. "I feel everyone should be of service to their community, state and country without hesitation," she concluded.

## DR. KARYN HOLT'S FATHER INSPIRES HER TO JOIN THE AIR FORCE



Dr. Karyn E. Holt, an associate clinical professor in the Division of Graduate Nursing, voluntarily joined the Air Force as a Nurse Corps Officer after practicing as a Registered Nurse in civilian hospitals and in one army hospital for a decade. Although she was very successful in the civilian sector, she could not forget the stories her father told her while she was growing up about his experiences serving in the Air Force during the Korean War. "I wanted to serve my country as he had, meaning, in ways beyond what I was doing as a civilian," Dr. Holt said.

Dr. Holt joined the Air Force Nurse Corps and advanced her career more in three years of service than she had in many years of civilian work. She was introduced to other parts of the United States, to other countries, to alternate ways of providing nursing care, and to what it means to be part of a team of health care professionals all with the one goal of providing the best medical outcome for a wounded soldier. She learned how to work with physicians, social workers, technicians and therapists. "That camaraderie my father spoke about, I was now experiencing," she said.

While she was in the Air Force, Dr. Holt earned a Master's Degree at Georgetown University, served our country alongside the Bolivian Air Force, taught at the Air Force Academy, taught at several universities as a clinical adjunct professor throughout the United States and delivered more than 2,000 babies as a Certified Nurse Midwife, which she calls one of the "highlights" of her career.

"It was important to me to serve my country in the military in order to give back to my country what I feel it has afforded me: freedom. I value highly the freedom I have to vote for the candidate of my choice, to say what I want in public and to worship my God without fear of reprisal or interference," Dr. Holt said. "I feel so strongly about these tenets that I am willing to literally fight, despite my own discomfort, in order for our country to maintain these freedoms for all of us."

## LINDSEY LEIBIG '11 GIVES BACK TO HONOR THOSE WHO DIED FOR HER FREEDOM



Lindsey Leibig, 1st Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, has wanted to practice medicine since childhood. After September 11, 2001, she started to think about joining the military and began to realize that she had the opportunity to be part of something bigger than herself. When she was accepted into the Physician Assistant Program at the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions, she went to a military recruiter and was selected for a scholarship. Today, Leibig works in Alexandria, Virginia as a Family Practice Physician Assistant for the United States Air Force.

"I have the privilege of taking care of some remarkable folks that sacrifice so that I can live in freedom. That's not something to take for granted, so I chose to give back," she said. Leibig has more than 1,300 patients that are solely her responsibility at the USAF family health clinic. She sees a minimum of 90 patients weekly in addition to her administrative responsibilities. "To say that life is busy is an understatement," she said.

Her husband, who she hasn't seen since Thanksgiving, is currently deployed with the Army. Her younger brother serves in the Air Force, as well. "I have many dear friends that have served and suffered great loss. The bottom line is that this is all very personal to me," she said.

Simply knowing why she's in the military without reservation helps her on the hard days when she needs something to grasp onto and push herself forward. Leibig said that working as a Physician Assistant with the USAF isn't easy, but it is an honor. Leibig said that Memorial Day is important because it honors those that have gone before us who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Although the day is recognized by a long weekend and a Monday off from work, she does not want people to lose sight of what this day actually means.

"It's about more than a Facebook shout out to those that serve. It's a somber day that should honor not only those who have died for our freedom, but also the families that supported them along the way," she said. "It's not about beer and burgers, or a day on the lake... it's about the men and women that died so that we can live with the freedoms we experience every day."