



Zonta's Lasting Impact on a Community

Ongoing Service Project

The Zonta Club of Washington, D.C., established the Virginia Longest Scholarship in 2005 to address the worldwide shortage of nurses, particularly the shortage of qualified nursing faculty. The scholarships were designed to provide financial assistance for women pursuing graduate or post-graduate nursing degrees at the School of Nursing, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, the intracity school offering these programs.

The scholarship was named to honor Virginia Longest (1918 - 2001), a benefactor and club member. Virginia Longest began her distinguished nursing career in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during World War II attending to the needs of the Allies in the European theater. After the war, she worked at the United States Veterans Administration (VA) and served as Director of Nursing Services from 1971 to 1980, supervising a corps of 16,000 nurses and 165 VA hospitals and six independent outpatient clinics. For her contributions and performance prior to her retirement in 1980, the VA presented Virginia Longest with its Distinguished Career Award and the Chief Medical Director's Honor Award.

Every recipient of the Longest scholarship must be a graduate/post-graduate nursing student in good academic standing at The Catholic University of America, pursuing or planning to pursue a career in nursing education, must demonstrate financial need, and be recommended by the Dean, School of Nursing.

Impact on the Local Community

Since inception of the scholarship, awarded annually, 14 women have received scholarships in the amount of US\$ 2,500 – 3,500. To date, eight of the recipients have earned their degrees. One received a master's degree in nursing and seven graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Five others are doctoral candidates with their dissertations in progress. One of the recipients has been lost to follow up.

Five (71%) of the seven nurses with doctoral degrees are full time nursing faculty at universities in Washington, DC. One is an associate professor and two are assistant professors. One also serves as Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Studies. The other two teach nursing at universities in nearby Baltimore, Maryland; one teaches part time and the other is an associate professor.

The master's degree graduate is a dual primary/acute care pediatric nurse practitioner at Children's National Medical Center, Washington, DC. In this role, she is a preceptor for nursing students from The Catholic University of America and The George Washington University.

All five of the doctoral candidates are also involved in teaching. Two are faculty in schools of nursing in Washington and two at nearby institutions. The other precepts nurse practitioner and medical students as a nurse practitioner specialist.

There is no doubt that these women have made and are making a significant impact on the profession of nursing in the community they serve. Virginia Longest would be very proud of these nurses who were educated locally and are now contributing to the education of future nurses and providing health care for others in their diverse roles. The Zonta Club of Washington, D.C., is committed to supporting these contributions through our nursing scholarships.

Summary of a Long-standing Service Project at the Club Level
Club: Zonta Club of Washington, D.C.
Service Project: Virginia Longest Nursing Scholarships
Timeframe: 2005 through present
Criteria for award of scholarships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduate or doctoral nursing student at The Catholic University of America (CUA) - Intent to pursue a career in nursing education - Demonstrates financial need - Recommended by the Dean, School of Nursing, CUA
Number of scholarships awarded as of 2018: 14
Value of scholarships awarded: \$39,500
Current status of award recipients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One master's degree recipient has graduated - 12 awards made to doctoral students: 7 have earned Ph.D. degrees; 5 have dissertation in progress - One recipient has been lost to follow up
Impact on Community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's degree graduate employed as a pediatric nurse practitioner (PNP) at local children's hospital and is precepting PNP students from two local schools of nursing - Seven of the PhD graduates now teaching nursing - 5 at local schools of nursing and two at a nearby University. - Of the 5 whose dissertations are in progress, all teach nursing - 3 at local universities, one at a nearby university and one out of state. - These data certainly verify that the desired outcome of the scholarship awards – to address the shortage of qualified nursing faculty – has been achieved.



Photo of Virginia Longest, benefactor of the Virginia Longest Nursing Scholarship

Article written and submitted by Janet R. Southby, RN, PhD, member and past president of the Zonta Club of Washington, D.C., May 16, 2019