

USask alumnus provides pediatric nursing care abroad



College of Nursing alumnus Justin Eisenkirch (BSN'17) is a dedicated registered nurse providing care abroad for children with heart disease. [Submitted](#)

College of Nursing alumnus Justin Eisenkirch (BSN'17) is a dedicated registered nurse providing care abroad for children with heart disease. Eisenkirch is a member of the Novick Cardiac Alliance team, a non-governmental organization specializing in humanitarian aid for pediatric patients suffering from heart disease. He has been around the world, including multiple trips to Ukraine, where he has played a crucial role in developing heart surgery programs for children in low to middle-income countries. He spent the month of September 2023 in Uzbekistan.

"As a registered nurse, I've always been drawn to helping children," said Eisenkirch. "Prior to joining Novick, I worked at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta, but there was always a part of me that wanted to work abroad. When I was introduced to the work Novick did, I was immediately intrigued."

Although working abroad sometimes means providing critical care in challenging and dangerous environments, Eisenkirch's commitment to providing essential cardiac care to children suffering from heart disease remains unwavering. "I've found myself

in the midst of a bombing in Ukraine, but it hasn't stopped me from striving to save lives," said Eisenkirch.

"It reminds me of the risks humanitarian workers face, but also reinforces the commitment of medical professionals working abroad to save lives and makes me extremely proud to be a registered nurse making a difference in the world."

Eisenkirch reflects back on his time spent at the University of Saskatchewan and says he is thankful the College of Nursing teaches nursing students about global health initiatives.

"When I was a nursing student, the College of Nursing taught us about global nursing, about the impact just one health-care professional can have on the most vulnerable. We were always reminded that when we became registered nurses to be compassionate, resilient, and provide dedicated care to our patients. As a registered nurse working abroad, that's what I'm doing and I love it."

"My ultimate goal is to improve health-care for those in need; to improve health-care systems and save lives in some of the most vulnerable communities."

Granddaughter becomes nurse to honour late grandmother's memory

Taylor Cleveland (BSN'22) goes to work every day as a registered nurse hoping to make her late grandmother and USask alumna Carol Cleveland proud. Cleveland had recently completed high school and was unsure of what her future looked like when her grandmother Carol Cleveland (BSN'70) fell ill. After spending a number of weeks at her grandmother's bedside in Surrey, British Columbia, Taylor quickly figured out nursing was the path for her.

"Towards the end of my grandmothers' life when she was in the hospital, I was able to be there with her," said Cleveland. "In her final days, she taught me the caring touch of a nurse, as I was able to take part in her care and witness her nurses take such gracious care of her when she needed it most. This instantly inspired me to want to do the same for others."

After all, Cleveland's grandmother had set the example decades before. After USask graduation and becoming licensed in 1970, Carol Cleveland worked as a registered nurse in long-term care, the operating room, and with public health in Calgary, Alberta, then as a public health nurse for Fraser Health in Cloverdale, British Columbia before retiring in 1996.

Cleveland completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at the USask Regina Campus. "I chose the University of Saskatchewan for my nursing program, as I felt it would honour my grandmother, as she was a proud USask nursing alumna." After finishing her USask BSN degree and becoming licensed, Cleveland has been working in general surgery at Regina General Hospital. "I am incredibly proud to wear the title of an RN," said Cleveland. "My grandma was the kindest, most selfless person I knew and since she was a registered nurse, I thought I could be more like her by following in her footsteps."

For others that are considering entering the profession, Cleveland says to go for it! "While I won't deny the stress and tears that come with being a student nurse and even from working as an RN, the tears, good and bad, are worth every second. Being able to make a difference in patients' lives and help them when they are struggling the most, makes the profession so rewarding."



Taylor Cleveland (BSN'22) became a registered nurse hoping to make her late grandmother and USask alumna Carol Cleveland (BSN'70) proud. [Submitted](#)

//

My grandma was the kindest, most selfless person I knew and since she was a registered nurse, I thought I could be more like her by following in her footsteps. //



Remembering a devoted patient advocate

College of Nursing alumna Wanda Krauss (BSN'80), the nurse who always went the extra mile to advocate for patients. Submitted

Nursing alumna Wanda Krauss (BSN'80), who passed away in 2021 in Guelph, Ontario, is remembered as the nurse who always went the extra mile to advocate for patients.

Krauss started her Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at the University of Saskatchewan in September 1976, alongside her husband Ken Krauss (BComm'80), who was studying to become an accountant. Wanda was awarded a scholarship each year for the final three years of her program, based on academic achievement. She completed her degree in May 1980 and passed her registered nurse licensure examination in June.

Ken and Wanda married in August 1979, between third and fourth years of university. When they completed their programs, they moved to Regina, where Krauss worked in intensive care at Regina General Hospital until she retired in 1994. "Wanda was highly regarded by her nursing colleagues and the medical staff in intensive care where she worked her entire career," said Ken.

Ken credits the esteem that so many doctors had for Wanda to her nursing degree. When Wanda began working as a registered nurse, there were few nurses with degrees; the majority were diploma prepared.

"She came home and told me many times when she went head-to-head with top doctors to advocate for her patients. She truly believed her number one job was to be the patient's advocate and she felt she could advocate for her patients because of her degree education. Being a nurse is what defined her and she was very

proud to be a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing."

Ken and Wanda were married for almost 42 years before Wanda passed away. He remembers her as the most caring and compassionate person he knew; two traits he feels all nurses share.

"It was amazing to see how many people valued her medical knowledge and how she helped them navigate the health-care system," said Ken.

"In my experience, nurses are some of the most kind and considerate people."

Outside of being a nurse, Ken describes Wanda as an avid reader, accomplished pianist, and skilled card player.

Ken is a generous supporter of the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing.

"If my donations can help someone become a nurse like Wanda, that is all I can ask. I will continue to donate to the college on the anniversary of important days in our lives."

"Nurses are the backbone of the health-care system. Without them, there is no health-care. They are on the front line day and night, 365 days a year. Doctors and other health-care professionals come and go into patient's rooms, but nurses are always there to care for their patients. The nurses working today, mentor the nurses of tomorrow. We need more nurses and we need to see their contribution recognized more."

USask Rhodes Scholar focused on rural health-care reform



Taron Topham (BSN'23), a USask College of Nursing graduate, was one of two USask recipients of a Rhodes Scholarship this year. Submitted

University of Saskatchewan nursing graduate Taron Topham (BSN'23) will be heading to the University of Oxford in fall 2024 to complete double master's degrees, with an aim to spark change in rural health-care systems.

Topham was selected for the esteemed Rhodes Scholarship, a prestigious opportunity that will provide him with tuition, fees and a stipend for living expenses while he attends the University of Oxford in England. Topham is one of two Rhodes Scholarship recipients selected from USask in 2023. He plans to pursue both a Master of Science in Translational Health Sciences and a Master of Science in International Health and Tropical Medicine

"When I received the phone call informing me that I was selected, I thought it was a dream!" Topham said. "One of the panellists on the other end of the phone recommended I 'pinch myself' to make sure I wasn't dreaming."

//

The desire to be able to be able to use compassion, empathy, and problem-solving skills to provide care to individuals and their families motivated me to pursue a degree in nursing. //

Hailing from Grandview, Man., Topham was the recipient of a Loran Scholarship in 2019 and moved to Saskatoon after high school to pursue his undergraduate degree in the College of Nursing. Topham graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in June 2023, and has since been working full-time as a registered nurse on a high acuity medicine unit in Saskatoon.

"The desire to be able to use compassion, empathy, and problem-solving skills to provide care to individuals and their families motivated me to pursue a degree in nursing," he said.

Topham's research interests lie in studying harm reduction and the way that social determinants of health can affect individuals at both local and national levels.

"During my time in undergrad and work placements, I often wondered what interventions could have been implemented to prevent hospitalizations and rehospitalizations post-discharge," Topham said. "Coming from a rural Manitoban community, my main interests are in rural health-care reform and equitable health care for all."

Topham plans to study how health-care innovations can be adapted from research and used in real front-line health-care in a timely manner. He will also study major population health challenges in resource-limited settings, and how ethical approaches can be used to address these inequities.

"My dream career is in health policy analysis for rural, remote, and resource-limited health-care settings," said Topham. "A goal of mine is to improve access to health-care services and address specific challenges faced by these communities."

**This story has been edited from the original version by Brooke Kleiboer.*

ALUMNI REUNIONS



The 1963 Diploma Class celebrates their 60th Anniversary at the Saskatoon Campus. 📷 Roxanne Cossette

Spring and fall bring a different spirit to the University of Saskatchewan campus. Not only are students eagerly awaiting convocation or anxiously beginning new programs, but nursing alumni are also planning their class reunions.

In 2023, three classes gathered to reminisce about their nursing school times, share stories from over the years, and catch up about life today.

- June 9, 2023 – 1965 Diploma Class, 55th Anniversary. Held in Ottawa, Ontario.
- June 20 - 22, 2023 – 1971A Degree Class, 50th Anniversary
- September 14 - 16, 2023 – 1963 Diploma Class, 60th Anniversary



Current Bachelor of Science in Nursing students (l to r) Yetunde Fasuba, Cassiopeia Zeederberg, and Maiya Le meet with alumna Beth McHattie (NURS'63) during the 1963 reunion. 📷 Roxanne Cossette



(left to right) Patricia Kachman (NURS'63) and Sheila Wilson (NURS'63) during the 1963 Diploma Class reunion. 📷 Roxanne Cossette

BSN CLASS OF 1971A CREATES STUDENT AWARD



The 1971A Bachelor of Science in Nursing class celebrates their 50th Anniversary in Saskatoon. 📷 Bob and Cathy Anderson

The 1971A Bachelor of Science in Nursing class was the last of the five-year degree program in the (then) School of Nursing (now College of Nursing) at the University of Saskatchewan.

As they came together to celebrate their 50-year reunion, classmates expressed a desire to commemorate their careers in nursing by creating an annual bursary for a full- or part-time student in the College of Nursing.

The 1971A BSN alumnae recognize the competing demands on students' lives today as they balance jobs, families, and other financial responsibilities. They understand these demands can have an impact on a student's ability to complete the BSN program on a full-time basis. Through this bursary, the alumnae wish to recognize and encourage students to continue their studies, either full- or part-time, or to return to the program if their studies have been interrupted.

Alumnae from the 1971A BSN class have worked in all aspects of the nursing profession—clinical practice in acute, long-term, and community settings, education, research, and administration—and wish to support the profession by encouraging and supporting Bachelor of Science in Nursing students.

The first BSN Class of 1971A student bursary will be awarded in 2024.

