

Students Carry the Torch of Nursing

Kaiser Permanente Northern California recently awarded scholarships to 115 promising nursing students. Pictured, Deloras Jones speaks to nursing students receiving scholarships.

Jasmin Johnson, 27, is all dressed up — but what you really notice is the dazzling smile she’s wearing.

Johnson is at Preservation Park in downtown Oakland to receive a scholarship from Kaiser Permanente. The money will help her pay for “a good half” of her last quarter as she earns her dual master’s degree in nurse midwifery and women’s health nursing practice at UCSF.

Johnson is 1 of 115 students from colleges and universities throughout the Bay Area just awarded between \$1,000 and \$3,000 scholarships to go toward defraying costs while earning either associate, bachelor of science, master of science, or doctoral degrees in nursing.

The Texas native is deciding between working in a hospital setting and a birthing center.

“I love the aspect of a birthing center where it can be more natural, really supporting mothers and babies in ways that are suitable and more individualized for each person,” Johnson explained. “But working in a hospital gives patients who may be higher risk and unable to go to a birthing center the opportunity to be cared for by a midwife.”

Linking Today’s Scholars to a Legacy

The scholarship is designed for nursing professionals just like Johnson who are passionate and serious about nursing as a calling. It’s named after Deloras Jones, RN, MS, who spent her 35-plus-year career at Kaiser Permanente and was the organization’s first chief nursing executive across Northern and Southern California.

The scholarship was founded by Kaiser Permanente in 2000 in order to recognize academic excellence among nursing students while promoting a diverse nursing workforce. These days, according to Nikki West, MPH, director of HealthCare Education Management, the scholarship “promotes diversity in the nursing field and is a boost for underrepresented groups in nursing.”

Jones still attends every awards ceremony and at last month’s was mingling with the scholarship recipients.

More than 2,000 nursing students across California have received approximately \$5 million through the scholarship program, according to Ann Williamson, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, the regional chief nurse executive and vice president of Clinical Integration.

“I congratulate you for choosing nursing as a profession, for you have chosen wisely,” Williamson told the students. “Nursing is meaningful and important work that makes a difference every day.” Jones said she looks forward to the scholarship ceremony each year. She and other early School of Nursing alumna serve as a link between the organization’s nursing history and the students of today.

Writing the Book on Nursing

At the ceremony, Jones announced that a book about the Kaiser Permanente School of Nursing will be published around Nurses Week in May.

Publication will coincide with the World Health Organization’s designation of 2020 as the “year of the nurse and midwife” in honor of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, as well as the 75th anniversary of Kaiser Permanente.

“We were taught the preventive way of practicing medicine—integrated, holistic, community-based care,” Jones said of her training at the now closed School of Nursing, from which she graduated in 1963. “Henry J. Kaiser said that the School of Nursing was one of his greatest accomplishments.”

During the awards ceremony, Juliebee Craig accepted her scholarship with Emily, her 11-year-old daughter. Craig, who already has a bachelor’s degree in psychology, is earning her associate degree in nursing at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg, CA.

“It’s not about making money,” Craig said of nursing. “It’s about how you can make a difference in someone else’s life.”

“It’s a miracle to see a baby born,” added Johnson. “It’s just beautiful. And to be a part of that process for others is an honor for me, and a blessing.”