

Combined alumni reunion earns rave reviews

Nearly 500 alumni and friends came together last fall for the first ever Alumni Reunion Weekend, which included alumni from the colleges of medicine, pharmacy, nursing and the School of Allied Health Professions.

The halls were ringing with alumni Oct. 5-6 reminiscing about earlier days at UNMC, laughing and sharing their experiences since graduation.

The theme of the reunion, One Class – World Class, exemplified the spirit of the event as alumni were excited to connect with their peers from other UNMC colleges. Many of these alumni are married to each other and worked together earlier in their careers.

“We were thrilled with the response we heard from alums. They were excited to be back on campus and see all the impressive changes that have occurred,” said Kim Cuda, director of alumni affairs. “For some, it had been nearly 50 years since they were on campus. It was a great opportunity for them to see old classmates, to reminisce and exchange stories.

“We think we set the bar for future reunions at UNMC. Now that we have the template for the combined reunion, we will strive to make it bigger and better in future years.”

Dennis Strauss, M.D., '68, past president of the UNMC College of Medicine Alumni Association, concurred.

“Alumni Affairs did an outstanding job of pulling this together,” Dr. Strauss said. “I see a bright future for this event. All the disciplines enjoyed it. It was great seeing old friends. There was a good variety of events. The hospitality and dinner were exceptional. Everyone really enjoyed the video in which alums reminisced about their days at UNMC.”

Dr. Strauss along with Joyce Black, Ph.D., '99, president of the UNMC College of Nursing Alumni Association, and Elizabeth Hermesen, Pharm.D., '01, president of the UNMC College of Pharmacy Association, served as emcees for the Oct. 6 dinner at the Hilton Omaha Hotel.

Ten UNMC alumni provided reflections on their careers and student days at UNMC on video. Representing their colleges and class years were, from the College of Medicine - Sam Pirruccello, '82, Therese Safranek, '82, and Tom Waring, '57; College of Nursing - Shirley Bradsby, '57, Anita Evers, '72, Joy Osterberg, '57, and Louise Schleich, '57; College of Pharmacy - Kellye Arntzen Anderson, '82, and Jim Arntzen, '57; and physical therapy - Wayne Stuberg, '77.

The weekend activities included tours of the College of Nursing History Museum, a reception at the Joslyn Art



Loren Jacobsen, M.D., Donald Townsend, M.D., and Bruce Johnson, M.D., members of the College of Medicine class of 1967, visit during alumni weekend.



Alumni, John Ridgway, '71, Gerald Urban, Pharm.D., '88 and his wife, Linda Urban, Pharm.D., '87, enjoy the College of Pharmacy reception.

From the College of Nursing class of 1952, Jo Pinckley, Joanne Dill Messman, Verna Eucker and Jean Schropfer Molde share stories of their days in nursing school.



College of Medicine 1997 classmates David Burt, M.D., and his wife, Tripti Agarwal Burt, M.D., reminisce with Paige Rackliffe, M.D., and her husband Phil Rackliffe.



Celebrating their Golden Anniversary Reunion from the College of Medicine are Allen Unvert, M.D., Arch Templeton, M.D., and John Gaskill, M.D., all from the class of 1957.

Museum, a riverboat cruise down the Missouri River and tours of the burgeoning UNMC campus.

The kickoff event featured a breakfast in the Private Dining Rooms of University Tower.

Deans from five UNMC academic units provided alumni with an overview of their colleges and programs.

Bob Bartee, vice chancellor for external affairs, thanked alumni for their support of UNMC and invited everyone to capture the excitement during the weekend.

Cuda said the 2008 UNMC Alumni Reunion Weekend is slated for Sept. 19-20.

Five receive awards at alumni reunion

The UNMC alumni associations presented awards to many deserving alumni and friends during Alumni Weekend on Oct. 5-6.

The College of Medicine Alumni Association awarded the UNMC College of Medicine Alumni Association Distinguished Alumnus Award to **Robert Volz, M.D., '57, of Jackson, Wyo.**

A native of Lincoln, Neb., Dr. Volz served as chairman of the department of orthopaedic surgery at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center, where he designed some of the earliest artificial joints in the United States, including the first artificial wrist, elbow and knee. The artificial knee he designed has been used in more than 40 countries. He was co-founder of the Arizona Arthritic Center, a nationally recognized endowed research and teaching center.

Since retiring in 1992, Dr. Volz and his wife, Ann, have volunteered in several foreign countries, including Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Malaysia, Philippines and South Africa. The couple splits their time between Jackson, Wyo., and Tucson, Ariz. They have four children and seven grandchildren.

The College of Nursing Alumni Association awarded the UNMC College of Nursing Alumni Association Distinguished Alumnus Award to **Susan Hassmiller, Ph.D., '83, of East Windsor, N.J.**

A nationally recognized nursing leader, Dr. Hassmiller is senior program officer and unit head with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in Princeton, N.J. Her career has spanned



Robert Volz, M.D., center, with John Gollan M.D., Ph.D., dean of the College of Medicine, left, and Dennis Strauss, M.D. Dr. Volz was honored with the 2007 College of Medicine Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumnus Award.

the areas of nursing, public health, quality improvement, disaster response and recovery and leadership development.

Dr. Hassmiller joined RWJF in 1997 and is responsible for attracting, developing and retaining a strong health care workforce through leadership development, training and research funding. She recently completed a six-year term as a member of the National Board of Governors for the American Red Cross, serving as chairwoman of the Disaster and Chapter Services Committee.

Prior to going to RWJF, Dr. Hassmiller was with the Health Resources and Services Administration, where she was executive

director of the U.S. Public Health Service Primary Care Policy Fellowship. She also has taught public health nursing at UNMC and George Mason University and is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing. Dr. Hassmiller and her husband, Robert, live in East Windsor, N.J., and have two adult children.

The UNMC College of Nursing Alumni Association Honorary Alumnus Award was presented to **Judith Billings, Ph.D., of Kearney, Neb.**

Dr. Billings retired as assistant dean of the UNMC College of Nursing Kearney Division in 2005, having spent 40 years in nursing and nearly 30 years teaching nursing students in central Nebraska. She earned her bachelor's degree in nursing from Fort Hays State University in Fort Hays, Kan., before moving to Kearney to work at Good Samaritan Hospital. She was soon recruited as an instructor at St. Francis School of Nursing in Grand Island.

She went on to earn a master's degree at the University of Minnesota, with a focus on medical/surgical nursing. While working as an instructor at South Dakota State University in Brookings, S.D., she finished her doctorate in educational administration at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Billings returned to Nebraska when she was hired as the first chairwoman for Kearney State College's Department of Nursing in 1976. She started the bachelor's degree in nursing program in Kearney.

In recognition of her nursing leadership, she has received numerous awards, including the Outstanding Nurse Educator Award from the Nebraska Nurses Association in 2002. Dr. Billings and her husband, Jerry, are enjoying retirement and continue to live in Kearney.

The College of Pharmacy Alumni Association awarded the UNMC College of Pharmacy Alumni Association Distinguished Alumnus Award to **Scott Swigart, Pharm.D., '82, of Victor, N.Y.**

With 16 years of academic pharmacy experience, Dr. Swigart has served the past eight years as dean and professor in two schools of pharmacy. He is currently the founding dean of the Wegmans School of Pharmacy at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, N.Y. Prior to this appointment, he was the founding dean at the Lloyd L. Gregory School of Pharmacy, Palm Beach Atlantic University, West Palm Beach, Fla.

As a founding dean, he has been responsible for all aspects of starting a new college, including navigating the accreditation process, developing curriculums, raising funds, recruiting faculty and students, creating policies and procedures, establishing practice departments and building facilities.

A 1979 graduate of Wayne State College in Wayne, Neb., Dr. Swigart also has held administrative positions at Nova Southeastern University College of Pharmacy in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and at Ferris State University College of Pharmacy in Big Rapids, Mich.

In addition to Dr. Swigart's extensive leadership, teaching and practice experience, he has been active in several professional pharmacy and medical organizations and serves as a volunteer with several community service organizations. His wife, Cindy, and his parents, Janice and Russell Swigart, joined him at the UNMC Alumni Celebration Dinner.

The UNMC College of Pharmacy Alumni Association Early Career Achievement Award was presented to **James Rybacki, Pharm.D., '87, of Easton, Md.**

Dr. Rybacki is president of the Clearwater Group and lead clinical consultant for the Medicine Information Institute, Inc. He also is host of a medical Web site – www.medicineinfo.com. In his varied career, he provides medical research communication, professional and consumer education, drug information services and clinical programs to health care professionals, consumers, employers and insurance companies.

He co-authored "The Essential Guide to Prescription Drugs" for five years before assuming full authorship with the 2006 edition. He is the original host, writer and producer of the nationally syndicated radio program, "The Pharmacist Minute" and "The Bayer Aspirin Report with Dr. Jim Rybacki" and is often interviewed in the national media.

Dr. Rybacki helped develop national tool kits and guideline driven practices for the American Heart Association's Compliance Action Program. He served as a medical adviser for the National Advisory Council of Mended Hearts and helped develop a book for hospitalized heart patients. He is frequently asked to speak on heart disease, diabetes, adverse drug reactions, women's health, HIV/AIDS and osteoporosis.



Judith S. Billings, Ph.D., left, and Susan B. Hassmiller, Ph.D., second from right, received their honors during Alumni Weekend. Pictured with them are Virginia Tilden, D.N.Sc., dean of the College of Nursing, second from left, and Joyce Black, M.S.N., Ph.D., '81, '99, president of the College of Nursing Alumni Association.



James Rybacki, Pharm.D., '87, second from the left, Scott Swigart, Pharm.D., '82, second from the right, received their awards in October. Also pictured are Clarence Ueda, Pharm.D., Ph.D., past dean of the College of Pharmacy, and Elizabeth Hermsen, Pharm.D., '01 and 2006-07 president of the College of Pharmacy Alumni Association.