CONNECT
FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS
SPECIAL EDITION

2020
THE FRONT LINE
In 2020, I sent many more handwritten thank-you notes and letters of congratulations than I historically have. It just seemed the right thing to do!

It was a tough year. A long year. We all needed and continue to need a little extra kindness, and it was good way to manage my own stress, feel better and hopefully… to help others smile.

The disease COVID-19, caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, dominated headlines, communities and lives, leaving in its wake untold amounts of grief, exhaustion, anxiety, loneliness, anger and stress.

I also strongly believe that all challenges yield opportunities, and I will long remember 2020 for the medical center’s inspiring response. We answered the nation’s call early on to monitor, welcome and care for some of the first Americans with COVID-19, one of the first of any academic medical center in our nation. We adapted quickly to online learning. We answered cybersecurity challenges. We answered the bell with innovative breakthroughs and conducted groundbreaking clinical trials.

We were a comforting presence, both as reliable arbiters of truthful information and in delivering the level of care Nebraskans have come to expect.

I cannot be prouder of the collective response by everyone at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and our primary clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine. We successfully confronted these challenges and on a day-by-day basis, turned them into opportunities. You will read more about that in the pages of this special edition of CONNECT magazine.

Still, our collective response is made up of many large and small individual responses. The way each of us dealt with the challenges and helped one another along the way.

History books will record the human suffering of 2020 and those who answered the call; in these pages, we will highlight the myriad ways we came together to serve and protect one another and continue our critical missions.

We never wavered from our promise, from our everyday responsibilities to deliver the best in education, research and extraordinary clinical care. We never stopped providing care and caring.

Now, as vaccines roll out nationwide, there is light at the end of the tunnel. We embrace a brighter 2021 and we stand proud of all our accomplishments in 2020.

Jeffrey P. Gold, MD
UNMC Chancellor

UNMC Connect is the campus/alumni magazine published annually by the Departments of Public Relations and Alumni Relations at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska Foundation. Issues of the magazine can be found at unmc.edu, News and Events. Permission is granted to reprint any written materials herein, provided proper credit is given. Direct requests to Today@unmc.edu.

UNMC is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC-NCA) and enjoys full accreditation of all its professional academic programs.

We are Nebraska Medicine and UNMC. Our mission is to lead the world in transforming lives to create a healthy future for all individuals and communities through premier educational programs, innovative research and extraordinary patient care.

The University of Nebraska Medical Center does not discriminate in its academic, employment or admissions programs, and abides by all federal regulations pertaining to same.

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CHANCELLOR’S UNIVERSITY-WIDE ROLE
On July 1, 2021, Dr. Gold will step aside from serving as chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Omaha and add the University of Nebraska systemwide role of executive vice president and provost to his title. Dr. Gold will remain chancellor of UNMC, a role he has held since 2014.
UNMC history: the 1918 flu pandemic
The McGoogan Health Sciences Library reminds us of the pandemic’s impact in Omaha.

An unprecedented year
During an historic year, UNMC forged its own story.

Answering the nation’s call
The medical center treated some of the first cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.

Expert guidance
Campus leaders shared their expertise at every turn.

Reasons to celebrate
In a year of lows, UNMC found reasons to smile.

A year of firsts
Campus finds new ways to achieve, celebrate, work and learn.

Student outreach
Student volunteers serve frontline providers, communities.

Research innovations
Scientists answer the call with record inventions.

Creating a more inclusive community
Racial injustices demanded change.

Sign(s) of the times
Images unique to 2020.

Source of hope
Vaccines offer promise in fight against COVID-19.

Nurturing the environment and our health
Major gift to improve public and environmental health.

NExT: a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity
Med center plans for next large-scale disaster.

Reflections
In their own words, campus leaders look back at 2020.

UNMC news
Alumni news
Class notes
One last thing

IN THE LOOP
May 6
Commencement
Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk

May 8
Commencement
Omaha, Scottsbluff

On the Cover:
Jasmine Marcelin, MD, assistant professor in the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine and an infectious disease physician with Nebraska Medicine.
Dr. O’Dell receives ACR’s highest award

James O’Dell, MD, received the American College of Rheumatology’s (ACR) highest award—the Presidential Gold Medal—in November during the ACR annual meeting.

The award is bestowed in recognition of outstanding achievements in rheumatology over an entire career. Established by the past presidents of the ACR, candidates have made important contributions in multiple areas such as clinical medicine, research, education, or administration. Funding support for the award of distinction is provided by the Rheumatology Research Foundation.

Dr. O’Dell, Stokes Shackleford Professor, vice chair of education in the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine and chief of the UNMC Division of Rheumatology, received a one-time, merit-based award and an award of $5,000.

Over the past 35 years, he has overseen the training of more than 600 internists and 1,000 residents. He served as president of the ACR and of the Rheumatology Research Foundation, its research branch, which Dr. O’Dell calls some of the biggest highlights of his career.

UNMC names permanent director of inclusion

Sheritta Strong, MD, became the director of inclusion at UNMC, reporting to Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, on a permanent basis in July. An assistant professor in the UNMC Department of Psychiatry, she had served on an interim basis since February.

Dr. Strong took over the new position, designed to help UNMC meet and expand its goals in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion, at a time when the nation as a whole was continuing to come to grips with the longstanding effects of structural racism.

As protests were held over the deaths of Black men and persons of color—including George Floyd in Minneapolis and James Scurlock and Zachary Bearheels in Omaha—Dr. Strong was working with campus leaders and the UNMC community to foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment that is receptive to the changes required to increase diversity, equity and inclusion.

“This is a pivotal moment in the history of race relations in the United States,” Dr. Strong said. “…UNMC has shown it is open to being part of a positive change…. and so many people at UNMC are working hard to be part of making things better for the entire community.”

In 2020, UNMC also announced:

- Shirley Delair, MD, as the UNMC College of Medicine’s first associate dean of diversity, equity and inclusion;
- Brandy Clarke, PhD, as director of the UNMC Office of Equity; and
- Jan Tompkins as assistant dean for diversity and inclusion, a new role in the College of Allied Health Professions.
Children’s, UNMC sign agreements

In October, a new agreement governing the continued operation of the Child Health Research Institute (CHRI) was signed by Children’s Hospital & Medical Center and UNMC, further strengthening their longstanding partnership and commitment to advancing pediatric research in the state of Nebraska and beyond.

The Child Health Research Institute is a University of Nebraska Center of Excellence and functions as a joint collaboration between Children’s and UNMC, focused on improving the lives of children through research. Comprising a team of dedicated clinicians, investigators and educators, the partnership allows both entities to most effectively promote discovery and innovation to improve the health and wellness of children. CHRI is committed to attracting and mentoring talent, fostering relationships between clinicians and investigators and training the next generation of child health researchers.

“When independent, freestanding children’s hospitals like ours and academic medical centers like UNMC team up, it elevates and enhances pediatric care, advocacy, research and education—all to improve the lives of children and families,” said Chanda Chacón, president & CEO of Children’s Hospital & Medical Center. “Pediatric research has the power to unlock cures and restore childhoods. We’re proud to partner together to advance this truly life-changing work.”

“UNMC and Children’s Hospital & Medical Center have enjoyed an important and long-term partnership,” said Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, chancellor of UNMC. “It has strengthened every aspect of pediatric care in the communities that we both serve. With this new agreement, we continue our commitment to work together to advance cutting-edge pediatric research that will ultimately lead to better outcomes for the children and families of Nebraska and the world.”

Library lands new name, but ‘McGoogan’ remains

When the McGoogan Library of Medicine changed its name in June, it demonstrated the expanded scope of the institution. The new name: the Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library.

“The new name reflects that we serve all the students in the health professions represented on the UNMC campus,” said Emily McElroy, who also was named dean of the library in 2020. While McElroy already had been part of the leadership team, her change in title was an acknowledgement of the key role she plays on campus.

“UNMC has traditionally not used the dean title,” said Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD. “However, Emily’s job description, scope of activities (including supervision of faculty involved in scholarly work and teaching, management of staff in different divisions and fundraising activities) are similar to, and in some cases more complex than, other academic health science campuses. This change brings Emily’s title to be commensurate with other nationally regarded campuses.”
Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Robert Hinson, founding executive director of the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska, retired at the end of 2020, capping eight years of building the $298 million institute that delivered national security solutions to more than 40 customers across the Department of Defense (DOD) and federal government.

Hinson, who completed a 50-year career serving in support of the DOD, is succeeded by Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Richard Evans, NSRI deputy executive director. Evans will be interim executive director until the university completes a national search for the next permanent executive director.

Regents approve cytotechnology master’s program

When the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions enters its first Master of Diagnostic Cytology class in fall 2022, UNMC will be only the seventh cytotechnology program nationwide to offer a master’s degree.

UNMC’s current postbaccalaureate certificate is the only cytotechnology program in Nebraska and one of 22 programs in the United States.

Cytologists assist with patient procedures called fine needle aspirations in various clinical settings and perform microscopic examinations of specially stained slides of patient samples for the purposes of diagnosing cancer, precancerous lesions, benign tumors, infectious agents and inflammatory processes.

“Consider yourself a disease detective who studies the secret lives of cells,” said program director Amber Donnelly, PhD.

Today, advances in technology and clinical best practices are driving the profession to evolve. Moving cytotechnology to a master’s-level program will ensure that UNMC’s graduates are competent to practice the newly outlined competencies of the profession, said Kyle Meyer, PhD, dean of the College of Allied Health Professions.

UNMC participates in COVID-19 vaccine study

In December, UNMC and Nebraska Medicine announced plans to participate in a national clinical trial to test the safety and effectiveness of an investigational COVID-19 vaccine for adults. The medical center plans to enroll up to 1,000 study participants.

The vaccine candidate was developed by Novavax, Inc., a U.S. biotechnology company, which plans to enroll 30,000 adults in the study, in the U.S. and Mexico.

Diana Florescu, MD, professor and infectious diseases specialist in the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine, will lead the Phase 3 clinical trial.
HELP US CREATE A STRONGER FUTURE.

Groundbreaking research and outstanding patient care takes teamwork. Our current and future doctors, dentists, nurses and allied health professionals are part of that team. And, you can be too.

We’re inviting you to join the NU Advocates team—a group of students, faculty, staff and alums sharing how UNMC makes a difference in our lives and the lives of others. Join us in advocating for a stronger future for UNMC, Nebraska and the world.

JOIN THE NU ADVOCATES TODAY AT NEBRASKA.EDU/ADVOCATES

and get a free window cling to show your support.
In October of 1918, a devastating influenza pandemic made its way from the east coast to Omaha. In response, the University of Nebraska College of Medicine published a three-page informational bulletin to calm a panicked public.

The bulletin provided a concise explanation of the influenza’s spread across Europe and into the United States, beginning at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Chelsea, Massachusetts. In 1918 the attributed cause of influenza was a “small rod-shaped germ, or perhaps a combination of this rod-shaped germ with one or two different kinds of globular-shaped germs.”

In mid-October, the Omaha City Health Commissioner E.T. Manning, MD, created a commission of doctors from the College of Medicine and Creighton University. Dr. Manning tasked the commission to engage in scientific research regarding the cause of influenza and how to suppress its spread.

Medical personnel understood that direct contact, like kissing or shaking hands, and indirect contact, like using communal cups, spread influenza. They recognized that coughing and sneezing spewed disease-transmitting droplets. The bulletin confidently stated, “The individual who coughs or sneezes carelessly without using a handkerchief is criminally negligent.”

Crowds also were a problem, and on Oct. 4, Dr. Manning banned all Omaha gatherings. Schools, churches and movie theaters were closed. Events such as dances, lodge and labor union meetings were canceled. State prohibitions against spitting in public and the use of common drinking cups were strictly enforced. Streetcars kept windows open for ventilation, and the downtown stores changed their hours in an
effort to reduce the number of shoppers in streetcars at any time.

For prevention, the bulletin advised Omahans to apply liquid paraffin or white Vaseline in each nostril 2-3 times daily. The sterile, oily preparations were thought to preserve the natural protective covering of the mucous membrane. For those afflicted with the virus, bed rest and whiskey were considered effective treatments.

According to the Omaha World-Herald, W.O. Bridges, MD, head of the year-old University Hospital, which had just opened in 1917, recognized the use of medicinal whiskey.

“I consider it very valuable,” he stated. “It has no direct action on the disease itself but is a powerful stimulant for the patient.”

Charles W.M. Poynter, MD, acting dean of the college of medicine, stated, “We have a supply of whisky [sic] and members of the hospital staff will use their judgement [sic] regarding its use.

It will be given only on prescription.” Whiskey was on war rationing, but officials released confiscated barrels to hospitals for therapeutic uses.

In 1918, influenza spread across the world. Medical personnel, then as now, did their best to understand the disease and slow its spread.

For more information about the 1918 influenza pandemic in Nebraska, read Kristin Watkins’ dissertation “It Came Across the Plains: the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Rural Nebraska.” Available on the McGoogan Library website (DigitalCommons@UNMC/theses & dissertations).
2020 forever will be remembered for the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustices that sparked nationwide protests, a chaotic presidential election and devastating natural disasters.

UNMC and its primary clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine, forged its own story during this historic year—responding to the pandemic with science, expertise, ingenuity and compassion.

Med center experts cared for some of the first Americans repatriated from Wuhan, China; monitored Americans quarantined from the Diamond Princess cruise ship; and led the first clinical trial on remdesivir. Then, as the pandemic spread across the United States, they cared for Nebraskans in hospitals and clinics, and worked tirelessly to share infection control expertise with the state’s nursing homes, meat processing facilities and schools.

They worked round-the-clock to share infectious diseases expertise with national leaders and elected officials and, as cases surged, shared heart-wrenching stories of how COVID-19 was impacting health care systems, patients and workers. Then, less than a year after the virus was first identified, the first non-trial vaccine, Pfizer-BioNTech, was administered to a U.S. health care worker, offering renewed hope.
COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS

*COVID-19 CASES

85,229,481
Global confirmed

20,640,214
U.S. confirmed

169,000
Nebraska confirmed

*COVID-19 DEATHS

1,845,408
Global deaths

351,590
U.S. deaths

1,672
Nebraska deaths

*as reported by the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center on Jan. 4, 2021

Each of us owns a unique story from 2020, whether you’re a student who took classes online, a health care worker who donned personal protective equipment to treat patients or a staff member who worked from home most of the year.

For many it was a year of strife, hardship, isolation and division. And yet, as a rainbow emerges after a rainstorm, 2020, too, had its moments of kindness, gratitude, unity of purpose and hope. Within these pages, you’ll remember how the medical center community rose to the unprecedented challenges of 2020.

ABOUT THE NAME

The virus is known as the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease it causes is called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In COVID-19, ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, ‘D’ for disease and 19 for the year the outbreak was first recognized, late in 2019.

Juliann Sebastian, PhD, dean of the UNMC College of Nursing, during a virtual commencement taping.
Voices from 2020

“IT’S AN UNPREDICTABLE VIRUS.”
GARY YEE, PHARMD, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs and leader of the Office of Faculty Affairs, after spending one month in the hospital with COVID-19

“WEARING A MASK SHOULD NOT BE A POLITICAL STATEMENT; IT IS A SIMPLE, EFFECTIVE PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTION TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.”
MARK RUPP, MD, chief of the UNMC Division of Infectious Diseases, to the Omaha City Council in August

“We were knocked down, but we were not knocked out.”
MICHAEL ASH, MD, vice chancellor of Information and Technology, on the information technology network outage, caused by a September cyber incident

“Mask up Nebraska.”

“I feel like this is Groundhog Year.”
TONYA NGOTEL, director of education and training for the Center for Preparedness Education

“The importance of the education we’re receiving at UNMC—whether as doctors, nurses, pharmacists or other health care professionals—has become even more salient during the COVID-19 pandemic. As I watch our instructors and other UNMC alumni work on the front line, I feel even more committed to my calling to care for others.”
THOMAS SCHROEDER, UNMC Student Senate president and student regent

“We can prepare over and over for a wave of patients, but we can’t prepare for a tsunami.”
KELLY CAWCUTT, MD, assistant professor in the department of internal medicine and associate medical director of infection control and epidemiology

“I am not a Nebraskan by birth, I am a Nebraskan by choice, and days like this make me incredibly proud to be a Nebraskan and to be an American.”
CHANCELLOR JEFFREY P. GOLD, MD, when the med center announced they would monitor Americans repatriated from Wuhan, China, for COVID-19

RACISM “IS EVERYBODY’S RESPONSIBILITY... WE ALL OWN IT.”
DELE DAVIES, MD, senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean for graduate studies

“Plan for the worst; hope for the best.”
MARC FERGUSON, executive director IT Operations, during an April Incident Command meeting
“The University of Nebraska is laser-focused on workforce development and economic growth. COVID-19 has only accelerated our thinking. The success of the state and its public university are intertwined: When we grow, so grows the state.”

TED CARTER, NU President

“We are entering a dangerous period for our state in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. The largest surge of cases and hospitalizations we have seen is currently upon us. We know how to beat this virus, but we’ve gotten complacent. COVID-19 has now killed nearly 500 Nebraskans, and many more are likely to die if we don’t take more action immediately. Nebraskans have a long history of helping our neighbors to work through the most difficult tragedies—floods, ice storms, tornadoes and droughts. We need to find that spirit of community now more than ever to overcome COVID-19.”

ON OCT. 5—A GROUP A PHYSICIANS AND SCIENTISTS FROM UNMC AND NEBRASKA MEDICINE—including James Lawler, MD, John Lowe, PhD, Angela Hewlett, MD, Daniel Johnson, MD, Mark Rupp, MD, and Jana Broadhurst, MD, PhD—released the statement at an October news conference

“Our university community can and absolutely should exemplify what it means to stand for a better, more just world through the way we treat each other... Together, we can continue to build a space where we keep each other accountable and move toward achieving racial and social justice.”

UNMC DEANS/DIRECTORS in a June message to the UNMC community

“Let’s agree to do the little things that make a big difference.”

CHANCELLOR JEFFREY P. GOLD, MD, on the importance of wearing a mask, social distancing and washing hands

“YOUR VOICES ARE LOUD WHEN YOU SUPPORT THE EFFORT, AND EVEN LOUDER WHEN YOU DO NOT.”

SHERITTA STRONG, MD, director of inclusion, during an all-campus diversity and inclusion listening session

“I wanted something that was unique to Nebraska... to show support for my fellow house officers and all the others that are working so hard.”

PAUL AYLWARD, MD, UNMC House Officer on the #WearRedBeProudNE initiative
2020: The Front Line

Nebraska Medicine • 1/14/20

The CDC has issued an alert for a new kind of flu in China. One person has died. Medical director of the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit, Dr. Angela Hewlett spoke with @Sydney_GTVDTV about what we know and don’t know about the virus. Watch for it tonight on @3NewsNowOmaha.

University of Nebraska Medical Center •@unmc • Feb 6

"Why Omaha? That’s what we practiced and prepared for."
- Shelly Schwedhelm, MSN, Executive Director, Emergency Management and Biopreparedness (@nebraskaMed) #coronavirus #UNMC

University of Nebraska •@unl nebraska • Feb 27

ICYMI: last night’s @TuckerCarlson @FoxNews story. Marc Siegel reported outside @unmc’s biocontainment facility, where Americans w/coronavirus are quarantined in Omaha. He talked about UNMC’s expertise, capabilities in addressing coronavirus. #coronavirus

University of Nebraska Medical Center •@unmc • Jun 2

We stand together at UNMC and will continue to support.

"We remain committed to ensuring our campus is a place where Black and Brown individuals and other people of color have the peace of mind needed to reach their fullest potential and achieve their dreams."

JEFFREY P. COLD, M.D., CHANCELLOR OF UNMC

University of Nebraska Medical Center Retweeted

@esquire • Mar 16

Esquire was granted exclusive access to the nation’s only federal quarantine and biocontainment center in Nebraska. Those who work there are as extraordinary—and as courageous—and you think they are. esquire.com

Inside the National Quarantine Center, There Is No Fear. There Is Only...

The people who work at the nation’s only federal quarantine and biocontainment center are as courageous as you think they are. esquire.com

60 Minutes Retweeted

@60Minutes • 3/22/20

At the University of Nebraska Medical Center, a patient with COVID-19 is cocooned inside an isopod as she is wheeled into the hospital’s biocontainment unit. cbsn.ws/39adFvZ

6:07 PM • Mar 22, 2020 • Sprinklr

170 Retweets 21 Quote Tweets 295 Likes
A little sunshine for the day...read THE most earnest, genuine letter written by a 4th grader to doctors at @UNMC_ID. We are grateful for all of the healthcare professionals working to keep our patients safe during this pandemic.

Dear Omaha doctors
I hope you all are rolling in thank you and appreciation notes you deserve. You do it because you want to help people even if it puts you in danger. You are working hard to develop a vaccine for COVID and are with front line parents during some of the happiest moments, you save people everyday and help people during hard times, you are all heroes and some of the smartest people out there. I hope this will encourage you to persevere in these difficult times. Not that I don’t have faith in you please share with your coworkers from Doctor Powers vs. The Villian Viruses.

Grateful for the opportunity to receive my first #CovidVaccine alongside some of my @UNMC_ID colleagues today. It was an emotional day. I was so excited I didn’t even feel the shot. #WeAreID #WhyIVaccinate @IDSAFoundation @IDSAInfo @NebraskaMed @unmc

Leaders from U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services tour UNMC Leaders with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services got a look at what is happening in the world of medicine at UNMC, in ... 7:fox42qtmt.com
On Feb. 6, media crowded into a room inside the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center to learn more about the local response to the coronavirus. From left to right, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts; UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD; Eric Kasowski, MD, quarantine Ashland team lead, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, adjutant general Nebraska National Guard; James Lawler, MD, executive director, International Programs and Innovation, Global Center for Health Security, UNMC; Shelly Schwedhelm, executive director, Emergency Management and Biopreparedness, Nebraska Medicine; and Capt. Dana Hall, regional administrator, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

ANSWERING THE NATION’S CALL

When the United States government called upon UNMC and Nebraska Medicine to help American citizens during the pandemic, they responded—just as they did in 2014 when they cared for patients with Ebola in the National Biocontainment Unit. This time, the med center helped monitor—at Camp Ashland—57 Americans who had been working in the Wuhan area of China, where the virus was first reported.

“I am not a Nebraskan by birth, I am a Nebraskan by choice, and days like this make me incredibly proud to be a Nebraskan and to be an American,” Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, said at the packed press conference to announce their historic role.

Soon afterward, the med center treated its first cases of COVID-19 when 13 passengers on the Diamond Princess (docked off the coast of Japan) were sent to Omaha’s National Quarantine Unit. UNMC’s James Lawler, MD, accompanied the group after having traveled to Japan to both provide infectious disease expertise to the disaster medical assistance team and help evaluate and evacuate the 400 Americans on board the ship. Once in Omaha, 11 of the 13 passengers tested positive for COVID-19. Later, two additional passengers arrived in Omaha, bringing the total monitored at UNMC and Nebraska Medicine to 15.
"We are pleased that the NIH (National Institutes of Health) has chosen UNMC and Nebraska Medicine as the site for this important work."

– Andre Kalil, MD

When Jeri Seratti-Goldman of Santa Clarita Valley, California, left quarantine in early March she said: "This place is special, and you should be very proud." Seratti-Goldman tested negative throughout her quarantine process; her husband, Carl, tested positive and wasn’t released until mid-March.

In late February, UNMC launched the first clinical trial in the United States to evaluate an experimental treatment for COVID-19. The randomized controlled clinical trial evaluated the safety and efficacy of the investigational antiviral remdesivir in hospitalized adults diagnosed with COVID-19. The first trial participant? An American who was repatriated after being quarantined on the Diamond Princess cruise ship and volunteered to participate in the study.

“We are pleased that the NIH (National Institutes of Health) has chosen UNMC and Nebraska Medicine as the site for this important work," said Andre Kalil, MD, professor of internal medicine at UNMC and infectious diseases physician at Nebraska Medicine, who led the trial. "Our expertise in treating highly infectious disease—as well as our capacity to conduct leading-edge clinical trials—will ensure that this trial is carried out in the most effective manner possible."
Jan. 7: The World Health Organization is notified of the novel coronavirus then known as 2019-nCoV, in China.

Jan. 11: China records its first coronavirus death.

Jan. 21: The U.S. announced its first confirmed coronavirus case—a man in his 30s in Washington state after returning from Wuhan.

Jan. 30: WHO declares a global health emergency as the death toll tops 200 and nearly 10,000 are infected.

Jan. 31: The White House announced it would ban entry for most foreign nationals who had traveled to China within the last 14 days.

Feb. 7: Fifty-seven Americans who were in Wuhan land in Omaha and are shuttled to the Nebraska National Guard’s Camp Ashland.


Feb. 17: Thirteen Americans who tested positive for or were exposed to the coronavirus are taken to the med center after landing at Eppley Airfield.


March 6: Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and health officials announce that a 36-year-old Omaha woman is the state’s first confirmed case of a person with COVID-19.

March 11: The WHO declares the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic.

March 12: The NCAA men’s basketball tournament—with Omaha scheduled to host games in the first two rounds—is canceled, as is the College World Series in Omaha.

President Trump announces that most travel from European countries other than the United Kingdom will be halted for 30 days.

The NBA suspended all basketball games after a player for the Utah Jazz preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19.

Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks and his wife, Rita Wilson, announce that they tested positive for the coronavirus while in Australia.
March 13  President Trump officially declares a national emergency.

March 14  Nebraska has its first case of community spread. Limits are placed on public gatherings.

March 16  UNMC takes proactive step of moving away from large group classroom teaching remote education, small groups, simulations and one-on-one mentoring.

March 18  The UNMC College of Medicine suspends all medical student participation in clinical activities that involve direct patient care, a decision in line with an AAMC recommendation.

March 19  Nebraska hospitals postpone nonessential surgeries for 90 days to prepare for a surge in coronavirus cases.

March 24  The 2020 Summer Olympics, which were supposed to take place in Tokyo, are postponed until 2021.

March 25  The Nebraska Legislature approves and Gov. Ricketts signs into law an $83.6 million measure for the coronavirus fight.

March 26  The United States becomes the country with the world’s most confirmed coronavirus cases with more than 81,000 confirmed infections and more than 1,000 deaths.

March 27  Nebraska records its first two COVID-19 deaths, a 59-year-old Omaha man and a Hall County woman in her 60s.

April 2  Global coronavirus cases top 1 million and at least 51,000 people have died.

April 3  The CDC recommends American wear cloth face coverings in public to prevent the spread of the virus.

May 11  Nebraska’s coronavirus death toll reaches 100.

May 25  George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, dies in police custody, sparking weeks of protests in cities across the country.

May 30  Protests in Omaha turned deadly when 22-year-old James Scurlock was killed in downtown Omaha by an Omaha bar owner, who later died by suicide.

May 28  U.S. COVID-19 death toll surpasses 100,000.

Aug. 11  The Big Ten officially decides to postpone all fall sports, including football.

Sept. 11  Statewide, 37,841 cases and 434 deaths have been reported.

Sept. 22  U.S. COVID-19 death toll surpasses 200,000.

Nov. 3  Election day

Nov. 13  Statewide there are 94,922 cases, 775 deaths and 918 active hospitalizations.

Nov. 26  A flurry of Nebraska communities—mostly in eastern and central Nebraska—issue mask mandates indoors, which covers more than half of Nebraska’s 1.95 million people.

Nov. 30  Nebraska topped 1,000 COVID-19 related deaths.


Dec. 15  UNMC and Nebraska Medicine received its first shipment of vaccine—nearly 3,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine manufactured by Pfizer. Hours later, six frontline workers received the vaccination; full clinics occurred in the days that followed.

Dec. 18  FDA granted Emergency Use Authorization for Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine.

Dec. 29  First reported U.S. case of the COVID-19 variant seen in the United Kingdom was discovered in Colorado.

Dec. 31  Statewide, nearly 169,000 cases and more than 1,600 deaths have been reported. U.S. COVID-19 deaths top 351,000.
Education is a natural part of any academic health science center, but the call for trusted information was in high demand throughout 2020. UNMC and Nebraska Medicine shared infection control measures and best practices with meat processing facilities, nursing homes, schools, correctional centers, shelters and child development centers to help them minimize the risk that COVID-19 posed to employees and the community. They shared their expertise with leaders at every level of government, and spoke to media that included the New York Times, CNN, Fox News, 60 Minutes and others.
The UNMC and Nebraska Medicine team responded in many ways including:

- Developing training and resource materials to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Global Center for Health Security, with contributions from UNMC’s College of Public Health, developed free, downloadable playbooks for meat processing facilities, long-term care facilities, schools, court systems and child development centers.

- Developing the Pandemic Recovery Acceleration Model (PRAM), which provides daily assessments of the regional specific impact of COVID-19 and the availability of medical resources to help officials make real-time decisions on key pandemic response measures.

- Reviewing reopening plans for the cruise industry. In July, Steven Hinrichs, MD, was named to a national panel tasked with exploring how the cruise industry could safely resume operations. Cruise industry leaders Royal Caribbean Group and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. announced the “Healthy Sail Panel,” which was comprised of top experts in public health, infectious disease, biopreparedness, hospitality and maritime operations.

- Leading the Big Ten task force for emerging infectious diseases. Chris Kratochvil, MD, leads the 14-member task force, which formed in April to provide counsel and sound medical advice to ensure the health, safety and wellness of the Big Ten’s students, coaches, administrators and fans.

- Helping develop guidelines for pressure injury care in COVID-19 patients. The UNMC College of Nursing’s Joyce Black, PhD, and Janet Cuddigan, PhD, are experts in the prevention and treatment of pressure injuries and serve on the board of the National Pressure Injury Advisory Panel (NPIAP) as secretary and president, respectively. Dr. Black also is a past president of the NPIAP. During the summer, the NPIAP put together information on how to get patients into position safely and care for them in the prone position.

- Advising Major League Baseball on best safety practices for teams.

- Developing a testing regimen for Nebraska Athletics. Scott Koepsell, MD, served as the interim director of NU’s coronavirus testing lab in UNL’s East Stadium to conduct rapid-response, point-of-care antigen testing.
Despite the challenges of 2020, the UNMC community found reasons to smile and celebrate. Whether heartfelt messages of thanks, formal ribbon-cutting ceremonies, student milestones or triumphant acts of teamwork, there was much to be grateful for in 2020.

**Dedication of the Dr. Edwin G. & Dorothy Balbach Davis Global Center**

Step inside the Dr. Edwin G. & Dorothy Balbach Davis Global Center on the UNMC campus and it’s clear this is not a typical health science building. Holographic images line the entryway and visitors are dwarfed by the atrium’s three-story high SONY Infinity Wall—the largest display of its kind in the Western Hemisphere—which showcases the caliber of technology innovation offered throughout the facility.

Nearby is the holographic theater—the first in any academic institution in the world—as well as the Laser CAVE-5, a laser-illuminated, five-sided fully immersive room that creates a “full-body” experience for users involving sight, sound, physical movement and interaction.

That’s only a fraction of the innovation—and possibilities—found inside this multi-level, interprofessional clinical simulation center, purposefully designed to create safe, innovative and experiential training environments as well as a venue for innovative research and business development.

“I’ve visited simulation centers around the world, but none compare to UNMC’s Davis Global Center,” said UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD. “This facility—and the professionals and technology within it—have been and will continue to be life-changing for the health professionals who train here. This center reshapes the way health care education is delivered for generations to come.”
“I’ve visited simulation centers around the world, but none compare to UNMC’s Davis Global Center.” – Jeffrey P. Gold, MD

The state-of-the-art facility houses:

- iEXCEL (Interprofessional Experiential Center for Enduring Learning)—a transformative model for health professions education that incorporates advanced simulation and visualization technologies in realistic, simulated health care settings to improve the outcomes of patient care; and the

- Global Center for Health Security—encompassing biopreparedness training, infectious diseases and high-consequence infections research, education and clinical care.

Nebraskans have long taken pride in strong public-private partnerships, and the Davis Global Center is yet another success story. Funding for the center was provided by the state of Nebraska, city of Omaha and the U.S. federal government. Private support was given by the Dorothy B. Davis Foundation, Mrs. Willa Davis Seemann of Omaha, the William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation, the Suzanne & Walter Scott Foundation and other benefactors.

During October’s virtual dedication, Dr. Gold was joined by Vice Admiral Charles “Chas” Richard, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command in Bellevue, Nebraska; Robert Kadlec, MD, assistant secretary for preparedness and response at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; Gen. John E. Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and most recently, commander at USSTRATCOM; as well as Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts and Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert.

Rededication of the Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library

The UNMC community celebrated the nexus of the medical center’s research, education and clinical missions in September with the rededication of the newly renovated Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library.

“It’s a remarkable transformation,” said UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, noting the new 40-foot-tall windows that look onto 42nd Street and provide an abundance of natural light for students, faculty and staff. “The library is not only filled with sunlight but it enlightens all those who pass through it.”

The new spaces feature study rooms, reflection rooms, conference rooms, a Maker Studio, classrooms and faculty hotel offices, as well as a writing and e-learning center. Floors six and seven of the library are open, but finishing touches remain on level eight, with its opening to the public set for early 2021.

“This renovation and reopening will go down as one of the more interesting chapters in the library’s history,” said inaugural library dean Emily McElroy. “Despite these challenging times, we’re excited about the opportunities the new space provides to the UNMC community.”

The library’s reopening comes after more than a year of construction, as part of the Wittson Hall renovation/Wigton Heritage Center project, which was funded through LB 957 in the 2016 legislative session.

Cutting the ribbon at the Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library rededication are, from left, Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, chancellor; Karen Honeycutt, PhD, chair, library advisory group; Emily McElroy, dean, McGoogan Library; Tom Schroeder, president, Student Senate; H. Dele Davies, MD, senior vice chancellor for academic affairs; and Brandy Clarke, PhD, president, Faculty Senate.
Dr. Truhlsen celebrates a birthday milestone

On Nov. 13, dozens of UNMC leaders, employees and students gave Stanley M. Truhlsen, MD, a birthday he won’t forget. Donning face masks, they stood outside the Stanley M. Truhlsen Eye Institute in Omaha for a “drive-by” birthday tribute for Dr. Truhlsen’s 100th birthday.

Dr. Truhlsen, who grew up in Herman, Neb., is a retired, well-known Omaha ophthalmologist, philanthropist and UNMC professor of ophthalmology, who has lived through the Great Depression, several wars and has seen many changes at UNMC through the years.

Holding large “Happy Birthday” signs, employees and students waved as his family drove him by the well-wishers. Dr. Truhlsen was presented with a giant birthday card by the director of the institute, Ron Krueger, MD, and UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD.

National Virtual Medical Orchestra features local talent

The Nebraska Medical Orchestra made its national debut when five of its members joined musicians from across the country to play Beethoven’s Symphony No. 4 in the first National Virtual Medical Orchestra.

“Our amazing Nebraska Medical Orchestra stood shoulder-to-shoulder (virtually) with some very big-name established medical orchestras,” said Steven Wengel, MD, assistant vice chancellor for campus wellness for UNO and UNMC.

Conducted by John Masko, music director of the Providence Medical Orchestra, the virtual orchestra was made up of 50 medical professionals around the country who are affiliated with 15 different medical orchestras, including from Yale, Northwestern University and Columbia University.

The Nebraska Medical Orchestra, formed in 2018, is directed by Matthew Brooks, DMA.

“Our amazing Nebraska Medical Orchestra stood shoulder-to-shoulder (virtually) with some very big-name established medical orchestras.” – Steven Wengel, MD
As facets of campus life shifted from in-person to online, 2020 was a case study in the importance of being flexible, patient, creative and nimble. As a result, faculty, staff and students found new ways to achieve, celebrate, work and learn.

Educational curriculum moves online; clinical activities by students suspended

To protect the health and safety of its community, UNMC pivoted to digital learning in mid-March. Days later, the College of Medicine, in line with an AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) recommendation, suspended all medical student participation in clinical activities that involved direct patient care. While students returned to caring for patients in early July, they still were not allowed to see COVID-19 patients. That decision was lifted mid-November to allow students, in a supervised manner, to care for COVID-19 patients. “The virus is not going away, and students entering clinical practice upon graduation should have experience in caring for patients with COVID-19 infection,” campus leaders said. “As an academic health science center and leader in treating highly infectious diseases, it is UNMC and Nebraska Medicine’s responsibility to train future health care professionals to safely care for all patients using safe practices learned in an educational setting.”

Unprecedented Match Day

UNMC’s 128 matching students were isolated from one another on March 20, each waiting to open a virtual “envelope.” Match Day at UNMC was just one of the numerous events and celebrations set aside in a “flatten the curve” effort in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Morgan Walgren, center, celebrates matching at the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine with sisters Taylor Cech, left, a physical therapist, and Hannah Walgren, right, a nurse.
More than 6,000 holiday cookies—baked by Sodexo and stuffed into bags by the UNMC Strategic Communications team—brightened the holidays for UNMC and Nebraska Medicine faculty, staff and students. Reserved in advance for pickup, the to-go bags were in lieu of the chancellor’s annual in-person holiday tea.

Zooming from one meeting to the next

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, faculty, staff and students moved in-person meetings to Zoom, an online platform for video and audio conferencing. “You’re muted,” became a common refrain as workdays filled with an unprecedented number of Zoom discussions with colleagues in a Brady Bunch-style grid.

Davis Global Center named a SAGES-certified center

The Dr. Edwin G. & Dorothy Balbach Davis Global Center at UNMC was recognized as a Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)-certified training center. The Davis Global Center is the only certified testing center in Nebraska for Fundamentals of Laparoscopic Surgery, Endoscopic Surgery and Use of Surgical Energy. iEXCEL, UNMC’s Interprofessional Experiential Center for Enduring Learning, is responsible for oversight and administration of testing at the Davis Global Center.

New Doctor of Public Health program offered

The College of Public Health launched a Doctor of Public Health program to prepare public health practitioners for high-level leadership positions. Fully online, the DrPH allows students the ability to work while completing their degree in as few as three years.
For the first time, the Munroe-Meyer Institute’s annual Trunk or Treat event was set up with a drive-through format, with candy deposited in bags hung on the side mirrors of cars. While the creative adaptation was designed to keep both families and brightly costumed volunteers safe during COVID-19, the spirit of the event remained the same. “Thank you so much for doing this,” one mother said as she drove past a trunk decorated as a graveyard. The UNMC Student Alliance for People of All Abilities also hosted a Drive-Thru Trunk or Treat event in Lincoln at the College of Dentistry.

College of Dentistry opens clinical/virtual simulation laboratory, digital design studio

2020 marked the first full year College of Dentistry students were immersed in cutting-edge educational experiences in the college’s new 64-station clinical and virtual simulation laboratory and 15-station digital design studio. There, students learn the latest clinical techniques by manipulating virtual clinical environments using 3D, virtual reality and haptics technology and build digital dentistry skills by using state-of-the-art CAD/CAM technology and 3D printers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students used the innovative learning technology to continue their paths to becoming tomorrow’s leaders in dentistry.

Dental hygiene grads first to test on manikins

The UNMC Dental Hygiene class of 2020 was the first class in the nation to complete the required clinical licensure examination using simulated manikins.

Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the dental hygiene graduates were not allowed to take the traditional, in-person patient-based licensure exam and were unsure when they would get the opportunity to do so. However, conversations with Central Regional Dental Testing Service resulted in their willingness to administer the first simulated patient dental hygiene manikin exam by adapting their dental periodontal manikin examination to accommodate the new graduates.

Approval was obtained from the Nebraska Board of Dentistry to allow the 2020 dental hygiene graduates to complete a manikin exam necessary for licensure, and the exam was held June 26.

“It was a little unnerving ...no one had taken a manikin exam before ...but in the midst of a pandemic it was definitely a better alternative to not taking the exam at all,” said Beth Shavlik, a dental hygiene graduate now practicing in Omaha.

During a Zoom call, UNMC leaders sign an attestation document acknowledging that they understand their responsibility in the fight against COVID-19 and will follow UNMC guidelines and expectations. Students were asked to sign a similar attestation.
When the pandemic pushed students away from patient care toward online learning, they found another way to serve. Some helped frontline providers with child and pet care. Some delivered food to refugee communities, created hand sanitizer, provided live music to care facilities, corresponded with home or facility-bound seniors, and started a targeted food bank for an underserved community. By year’s end, hundreds of UNMC students totaled more than 2,000 volunteer hours.

Among the community outreach efforts:

UNMC CoRe: Covid Relief—Started by two UNMC medical students—Taylor Kratochvil and Remy Grace Sass—this student-led, interdisciplinary program initially focused on providing childcare, pet care and errands to residents. It later expanded to all residents, physicians and members of the COVID-19 team at the medical center, as well as volunteers from all UNMC colleges. As needs were identified, the program grew to include over 250 volunteers to provide childcare, pet care, errands to frontline health workers, community mask sewing for Nebraska Medicine and the state’s largest school district, PPE donation and distribution for under-resourced clinics and hospitals and contact tracing support for health departments statewide.

Musicians for Healing—Medical student Natasha Hongsermeier-Graves created the group to bring music to people in health care settings. Amid COVID-19, that meant playing outdoors at nursing homes or assisted living facilities, allowing their orchestral sounds to waft across the parking lot and into open windows.
Support Your Neighbor COVID19—Organized by Ryan Jespersen and Sunny Massa, the group worked to keep vulnerable populations safe during the outbreak by delivering groceries and essential non-food items. The nonprofit foundation worked with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which operates a food pantry in Omaha. The outreach effort included a companionship component, which set up weekly phone calls between volunteers and the elderly. As Massa said: “It’s just being a good neighbor.”

The MUNA Box Project—Led by medical student Seif Nasir, students distributed boxes of donated food and toiletry staples to refugee and immigrant populations in Nebraska. MUNA stands for “Medical students United with Neighbors across America,” but Nasir, who is Palestinian-American, noted that, in Arabic, the word “muna” means pantry, adding a second layer of meaning to the name.

Students create hand sanitizer—UNMC pharmacy students produced hand sanitizer using hands-on skills, while following the Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Pharmacopeia guidelines. The hand sanitizer was distributed to the Munroe-Meyer Institute, the UNMC College of Dentistry, home care agencies, nursing homes, construction companies, dentist offices, homeless shelters, rehabilitation centers, training facilities and UNMC maintenance facilities.

Pen pals reduce social isolation—UNMC medical students Emily Jezewski and Abigale Miller launched a pen pal program to reduce social isolation among retirees. In all, 178 older adults living in the Omaha area—from different hospice centers, assisted living facilities and memory care units—have received letters, phone calls and emails during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students lift spirits for nursing home residents—Physician assistant students, led by Mikenzie Nordeen, painted exterior window murals to brighten the outlook for nursing home residents. With no formal art training, but a passion for painting and serving, the students made a difference. At St. Joseph’s Villa nursing and rehab center in Omaha, the paintings “brought joy to everyone inside, both the health care personnel and the patients,” Nordeen said.
Rosalind Franklin once said, “Science and everyday life cannot and should not be separated.” 2020 underscored the critical role of both science and research—and, at UNMC, sparked a wave of innovation. UNeMed, UNMC’s technology transfer and commercialization office, reported its most prolific six-month stretch in history. In the second half of the fiscal year ending in 2020, UNMC inventors produced a record 73 new inventions, 28 of which were in direct response to the pandemic.

Among the research highlights:

- **UV cleaning method:** UNMC researchers and Nebraska Medicine clinicians developed a safe and effective process for sanitizing single-use personal protective equipment. The process, which involved using ultraviolet light towers, enabled teams to decontaminate N95 respirators so they could be used multiple times, easing the strain of shortages during the pandemic.

- **Potential new HIV treatment:** A novel means to prevent HIV infection was developed at UNMC that could allow people with or at risk of acquiring the virus to take medicines once a year, which could eliminate complications that arise from missing doses of life-saving medicines. The department of pharmacology and experimental neuroscience team developed the world’s first potential yearlong antiretroviral (ARV) for prevention of HIV infection by converting a month-long ARV drug into a once-per-year therapeutic.

- **Efficacy of a long-acting HIV treatment combination:** A UNMC faculty member led the clinical trial of long-acting cabotegravir and rilpivirine. The findings, published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), may provide a new treatment option for patients living with HIV.

- **Intubation shield:** When placing a tube in COVID-19 infected patients to help them breathe became a high-risk procedure, a med center team developed the intubation shield. The protective barrier safeguarded health care workers.
from contagions and other contaminants during intubation procedures. Unlike other bulky intubation boxes, the simple, cost-effective design easily could be cleaned, stored and moved from room-to-room.

- **Aerosol and surface transmission potential of SARS-CoV-2**: A team with the Global Center for Healthy Security studied the environment of the National Quarantine Unit after the Diamond Princess Cruise passengers arrived in March 2020. The team discovered that SARS-CoV-2 spread through both direct as well as indirect methods, suggesting that care teams utilize airborne isolation precautions when caring for COVID-19 patients.

- **Lab testing**: A med center team developed a diagnostic test for SARS-CoV-2 detection to support repatriated Americans in the National Quarantine Unit and Nebraska Biocontainment Unit before public health or commercial tests were available. The test received emergency use authorization from the FDA, supports patient care at Nebraska Medicine and the surrounding community, and served as a gold standard for the evaluation of novel diagnostic technologies. The team also led the development of novel SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests.

- **Management of rheumatic disease during the COVID-19 pandemic**: UNMC faculty led development of American College of Rheumatology guidelines that were published in the NEJM.

- **‘Designer’ mice blueprints**: A UNMC-led research team created blueprints for almost 30 different genetically-engineered mouse models suitable for studying COVID-19. Their work was published in Nature Protocols.

- **Infectious aerosol capture mask and filter housing**: The device—a combination of new and repurposed tools that covers the patient’s mouth and nose and connects to wall suction—was created to prevent contamination from COVID-19 patients who need oxygen but might not be symptomatic. The Air Force tested the device for use on their flights transporting COVID-19 patients. They liked it well enough to order 4,000 units. Additional units were sold to UNMC and Texas Children’s Hospital.

- **3D printed nasal swabs**: As a solution to chronic shortages, clinicians created a new type of nasal swab using a filament-based 3D-printer. It seems unbelievable that there are shortages of the kind of cotton swabs clinicians use to take nasal samples for various tests. Notably, the printed swabs were just as effective and reliable as more traditional versions already on the market.

- **Remdesivir trial**: The first clinical trial launched in the U.S. to evaluate an experimental treatment for COVID-19 began at UNMC with an American who had been on the Diamond Princess cruise ship.

- **COVID-19 triage app**: Creation of a mobile screening app—1-Check COVID (later renamed CheckCOVID)—helped guide individuals concerned that they might have COVID-19 and helped first responders and other health care providers determine a person’s likelihood of carrying the disease. The medical center team, assisted by Scott Scholars at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, later launched a campus specific app—1-Check—for UNMC and UNO.

- **Aortic aneurysm treatment**: UNMC researchers found doxycycline had no beneficial effect compared to a placebo in slowing the growth of abdominal aortic aneurysms. The major finding, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, will change how physicians treat small abdominal aortic aneurysms. The study was funded by a $10 million grant by the National Institutes of Health National Institute on Aging.

- N95 respirator masks undergo a sanitation process utilizing an ultraviolet light tower at the medical center.
George Floyd was not the first Black man killed by police in 2020, but video of the May 26 tragedy in Minneapolis marked a turning point, spotlighting centuries of racial injustice. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans—young and old, black and white, peaceful and not—gathered to protest police brutality, recognize that Black Lives Matter, acknowledge the issue of systemic racism and demand change. In some cities, demonstrations led to riots and looting, tear gas and arrests. Curfews were issued.

In Nebraska, protests were held from Alliance to Omaha to Wayne. At UNMC and Nebraska Medicine, hundreds of providers, staff, faculty and students gathered June 5 to kneel in silence in recognition of Floyd’s death and continued racial
injustice. In the weeks that followed, UNMC took steps to create sustainable change and a more inclusive culture. In part, leaders established the Office of Inclusion and the Office of Equity; appointed diversity, equity and inclusion leads in colleges; formed a local chapter of White Coats for Black Lives; focused on structural racism in its high-profile Breakthrough Thinking series; and held campuswide and college-specific listening sessions.

The work continues at all levels, but as the deans and directors wrote in their summer message to campus: “Our university community can and absolutely should exemplify what it means to stand for a better, more just world.”
2020: The Front Line

SIGNS OF THE TIMES
Signage on the door of the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory indicates coronavirus testing is in progress.
Leave a lasting legacy on the future of human health with a planned gift to the University of Nebraska Medical Center. By considering UNMC in your estate planning, your generosity will span generations to come, which means you’ll help provide the best care possible for patients throughout this century and beyond.

To find out how to include UNMC in your legacy, visit us online at nufoundation.org/giftplanning. Or you may email gift.planning@nufoundation.org or call a gift planning officer at the University of Nebraska Foundation at 800-432-3216.
In mid-December, the Food and Drug Administration granted Emergency Use Authorization to both the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 and Moderna vaccines, providing a morale boost to frontline workers. Within hours of its initial shipment, Nebraska Medical Center vaccinated its first staff members. Said one recipient: “We know it’s a game changer. This could change the tide of things for everyone, not just health care workers.”
NURTURING THE ENVIRONMENT AND OUR HEALTH

by Tom O’Connor

With a massive flood in 2019 and a serious drought in 2020, Nebraska knows only too well the water extremes that can occur and the havoc they can produce.

For Jesse Bell, PhD, it makes Nebraska the perfect place for him to conduct his work as director of the newly established Water, Climate and Health Program based in UNMC’s College of Public Health.

The program brings together experts from the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute (DWFI) at the University of Nebraska. It was created in 2020, thanks to a $5 million gift commitment made by UNMC alumna Anne Hubbard, MD, through her family’s foundation, the Claire M. Hubbard Foundation.

Dr. Bell grew up in the tiny community of Bloomfield in northeast Nebraska. He loved to fish and hunt and be out in nature.

When UNMC recruited him for an associate professor role in 2018, one of his colleagues said, “You could go to a lot of places. Why Nebraska?”

The answer was easy, said Dr. Bell, who was lured back to the Cornhusker state from Atlanta, where he created the first joint research position between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“I loved growing up in Nebraska,” he said. “I knew the state, and I felt there was tremendous potential for future work—a better chance that we could move the meter a little more to produce improved health outcomes.”

When it comes to flooding, Dr. Bell said most people think of coastal states as having the biggest problem. Amazingly, with its large number of rivers and waterways, Nebraska ranks as the sixth most flood-prone state in the country.

“The 2019 flood was devastating to Nebraska,” he said. “It resulted in three deaths, and the $10.8 billion economic loss made it the costliest inland flooding event in U.S. history.

“We saw the full spectrum of flooding—the damage caused by rushing water, contaminants, bacteria and ag chemicals in the water, debris you can’t see, animals trying to escape. Once the waters receded, we saw the problems afterwards, such as mold in houses and mental health issues due to lost crops and livestock.”

With 92% of Nebraska’s land dedicated to agriculture, it’s no surprise that high nitrate concentrations can be found in groundwater across the state. Nitrates, which have been linked to potentially serious health issues in babies, originate primarily from fertilizers, septic systems and manure storage or spreading operations.

In addition, other elements found in Nebraska’s water can impact health. These include arsenic, lead, uranium, agricultural chemicals and herbicides such as atrazine.

Dr. Bell said 80% of Nebraska’s water comes from community public water systems, while the remaining 20% comes from private domestic wells.

Climate change is another area of concern in Nebraska, he said.

“Over the past 50 years, Nebraska’s temperatures and precipitation have increased. Scientists expect this trend to continue in the future, which will translate to winters being wetter and summers being drier.”

By partnering with DWFI, the Water, Climate and Health Program will be able to enhance its effectiveness, he said.

Peter G. McCormick, PhD, executive director of DWFI, which celebrated its 10th anniversary last year, agrees.
This is a strategically important alliance for our institute and the UNMC College of Public Health,” Dr. McCornick said. “It will enable us to better research the complex issues impacting water quality and develop solutions for improved public and environmental health. We’re pleased to welcome Dr. Bell to the DWHI leadership team.”

The Water, Climate and Health program will work in three main capacities:

- Bringing diverse university experts together to solve complex issues
- Finding technical and policy solutions to improve the environment for better human health
- Providing experiences for students studying these issues

Research topics the program could address include the following:

- Links between the state’s water quality and pediatric cancer and birth defects
- Health outcomes related to Nebraska’s flooding
- The impact of technology, such as precision application of nitrogen fertilizer on soil and water quality
- Mapping at-risk populations and environmental exposures in the state

“The hope is to build an interdisciplinary program across the university that will thrive for decades to come,” Dr. Bell said. “We have plenty of work to do. We will focus on Nebraska first, then the region, and then everything outside the region. I’m excited about this. I think there will be a lot of good that will come out of this.”

Looking out for Mother Nature

Dr. Hubbard has had a love affair with nature since she was in her mid-20s. When she was looking to make a significant investment in the University of Nebraska, it was obvious to her that the best use of the money would be to address Nebraska’s most pressing public health issues associated with water and climate.

“Nature is so important. It calms you down … relieves mental stress. I love getting out and moving around,” said Dr. Hubbard, a 1977 graduate of the UNMC College of Medicine and member of the University of Nebraska Foundation Board of Directors. “I know there is a God when I’m outside.

“We need a healthy environment. Life is circular. All of us are connected. If we have unhealthy water or soil, it affects everyone—humans, plants and animals. We have to look out for Mother Nature, because she’s trying to look out for us.”

In addition to establishing the Water, Climate and Health program, her gift commitment created the Claire M. Hubbard Professorship of Water, Climate and Health that Dr. Bell will hold, pending approval by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

A pediatric radiologist, Dr. Hubbard worked in children’s hospitals in Kansas City and Philadelphia for 21 years before joining UNMC and Children’s Hospital & Medical Center in 2005. She retired in 2015.

Her gift to the University of Nebraska Foundation helps meet a critical need in public health.

“The idea behind public health is to prevent disease instead of just treat it,” Hubbard said. “It is so obvious to me how much impact environment has on human health.

“Water is life. The goal is for everyone to have safe, clean water available. It’s exciting to see the University of Nebraska come together to try to make this happen.”

Visit nufoundation.org/university-receives-5 to learn more about Dr. Hubbard’s reasons for supporting the study of water, climate and health.

MATCHING FUNDS AVAILABLE

A portion of the gift from the Claire M. Hubbard Foundation will go toward funding fellowships for University of Nebraska students and providing research support for graduate and professional students conducting research in water, climate and health.

The student support funds are being matched by a gift from the Robert B. Daugherty Foundation, which will allow more students to receive research stipends (matching funds are available through June 30, 2021). The Hubbard gift also is meant to fund outreach to Nebraska middle and high school students and educators, to engage them in issues of public health and the environment and inspire them to pursue a career in public health.

“The University of Nebraska hopes to fund two to four fellowships annually that will cover half the cost of supporting a graduate student researcher,” said Meghan Langel, manager of the Water, Climate and Health Program at UNMC. “Any graduate students in the university system are eligible.”

UNMC Connect
Imagine a network of facilities across the United States equipped to handle large-scale disaster response. Now, imagine one of these facilities on the UNMC/Nebraska Medicine campus.

Med center leaders are determined to make that vision a reality with Project NExT, a multi-billion-dollar expansion project proposed for the southeast corner of Saddle Creek Road and Farnam Streets in Omaha.

“Project NExT will be a game changer for the state of Nebraska and region,” Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, said of the proposed public-private partnership between UNMC and local, state and federal governments. The investment would be a boon to the state and local economy, as well as yield thousands of construction and permanent jobs.

The Nebraska Transformational Project, commonly referred as NExT, would be part of a network of facilities equipped to handle large-scale disaster responses from hurricanes and tornadoes to chemical spills, nuclear accidents and infectious diseases.

Unimaginable? Not really. After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the medical center envisioned a time when the nation would need a large, secure center to guard against the threats of bioterrorism and infectious disease. Led by infectious disease expert Phil Smith, MD, they spent $1 million to open a 10-bed biocontainment unit in 2005—the largest such unit in the nation. Then, they waited…and trained nonstop for the day when it would be needed. That day came in 2014 when the medical center treated three Ebola patients. In 2020, it was used for COVID-19 patients.

Now, as the pandemic has shown, there is a need for a coordinated network of high-level disaster response facilities across the country, and UNMC and Nebraska Medicine plan to be ready when the next disaster strikes.

As proposed, Project NExT includes:

- A state-of-the-art academic medical center facility that serves the needs of Nebraska and transforms the quality and practice of health education, training, research and care. The facility would provide capacity for training more health professional students.
- A federal all-hazard disaster response military and civilian partnership that provides training in the management of highly infectious and other emerging threats, as well as critical care, for federal, civilian and military personnel.

H. Dele Davies, MD
Senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean of graduate studies

2020 was highlighted by UNMC’s response to the tragic COVID-19 pandemic; protests after the loss of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Brianna Taylor, among others; a major cybersecurity event; and the profound transformation that occurred in the way we live, work and interact with each other.

It was a little disconcerting at first, we grew to be friends, and I still listen to KHTS webcasts while getting ready for work each morning.

After 43 days, we discharged the last of our Diamond Princess quests, and the NQU stood down. It was time to start thinking about a second retirement. In fact, I did retire effective May 31, 2020. At 8 a.m. on June 1, while hiking in the woods at a state park in Iowa, my phone rang. The caller ID read: “Jeff Gold.” The chancellor’s advice to me on that call: “You can’t go from full accelerator to complete standstill overnight; you need to ease into it gradually.” Of course, Dr. Gold was right—although it’s pretty much felt like continued full acceleration throughout the course of the past several months, as we’ve fought to keep the UNMC community safe from the worst effects of the COVID pandemic.

But an eight-hour retirement beats a seven-hour Destin vacation. By an hour. And there’ll always be other opportunities to retire. Someday. For now, it remains a great honor to be able to continue to work with the great leaders, faculty, staff and students of UNMC as we fight to extinguish the SARS-CoV-2 virus on our campus and in our communities.

Ted Cieslak, MD
Interim executive director for health security

I first became immersed in COVID response efforts as medical director of Nebraska’s National Quarantine Unit (NQU), the only facility of its kind. During normal years, my family and I spend time with cousins in Destin, Florida, each winter. Of course, 2020 was far from a normal year. But in early February, COVID had not yet become a big problem in the United States. We decided to proceed with our plans. Despite numerous pre-departure attempts to assure ourselves that all was quiet in Omaha, I was called back seven hours after arriving in Florida; the National Quarantine Unit (NQU) was receiving passengers from the Diamond Princess Cruise ship.

The honor of caring for the 15 passengers brought to our NQU is a high point of my tenure at UNMC. All were infinitely more gracious than I ever would have been had I been locked in a room alone for several weeks, the isolation interrupted only by the daily “brain biopsy,” as some referred to the deep nasopharyngeal swab test performed to see whether they were still shedding virus. From them I learned:

1. People rally when they need to. Despite weeks of isolation far from home and knowing that they harbored a potentially deadly disease, all responded with a calm grace. It was an honor to care for them.

2. No battle plan survives contact with the enemy. This maxim of Army life is applicable to the civilian world as well. Despite meticulous planning prior to the arrival of the quarantined individuals, we found ourselves improvising in the care of our charges. That’s a good thing, as we were able to refine our processes and procedures under real-world conditions.

3. Having a pediatrician care for 70- and 80-year-olds is, perhaps, not always the best idea. Fortunately, I had a great deal of help from a host of world-class nurses, physicians and other caregivers with much more experience than I in the care of adults. And my charges humored me.

4. Behavioral health is critical during mandated Directed Health Measures. All credit to David Cates, PhD—his daily town hall meetings were one of the most useful interventions in managing our quarantined individuals.

5. Act as if the media are everywhere—they are. One husband-wife couple among our guests own a radio station in California and would broadcast live from their quarantine rooms. While it was a little disconcerting at first, we grew to be friends, and I still listen to KHTS webcasts while getting ready for work each morning.

After 43 days, we discharged the last of our Diamond Princess quests, and the NQU stood down. It was time to start thinking about a second retirement. In fact, I did retire effective May 31, 2020. At 8 a.m. on June 1, while hiking in the woods at a state park in Iowa, my phone rang. The caller ID read: “Jeff Gold.” The chancellor’s advice to me on that call: “You can’t go from full accelerator to complete standstill overnight; you need to ease into it gradually.” Of course, Dr. Gold was right—although it’s pretty much felt like continued full acceleration throughout the course of the past several months, as we’ve fought to keep the UNMC community safe from the worst effects of the COVID pandemic.

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COVID-19 came in a flurry. The transition from a bustling campus to remote learning, working and teaching was a transformation that tested everyone; I am proud of how everyone stepped up to make sure our students successfully moved toward their degrees. With careful planning, our faculty, post-doctoral fellows and graduate students, too, continued their work.

As senior vice chancellor, I support the chancellor in the day-to-day oversight of campus-related matters and work with a talented group of deans and directors, with whom I went from twice-monthly meetings to daily virtual meetings. This was necessary to ensure that we kept the campus safe, secure and took care of the needs of our students, faculty and staff.

In 2020, we learned we could work effectively remotely and do more with telemedicine. faculty, staff and students demonstrated a desire to learn about the historical factors that have contributed to racial injustice and work toward our campus reflecting the profiles of the communities we serve. With strong anchor programs such as IEXCEL and the Global Center for Health Security, continued expansion of our health professional degree offerings, the recent redesign of the McGoogan Health Sciences Library, and the ongoing planning toward the once-in-a-lifetime Project NExT, the future of UNMC is strong.

“The transition from a bustling campus to remove learning, working and teaching was a transformation that tested everyone.”

– H. Dele Davies, MD

Peter Iwen, PhD
Director, Nebraska Public Health Laboratory

At the start of 2020, the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL) was performing routine public health testing to support, in part, national programs such as the Laboratory Response Network, the Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory Network, PulseNet for foodborne pathogen surveillance, CaliciNet and CryptoNet.

In addition, NPHL was participating in the influenza surveillance program, which is under the sponsorship of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to monitor influenza activity within the state. Since one of the ongoing roles for all public health laboratories (PHLs) is to provide an early response to detect and manage an emerging infectious disease, the outbreak of a “novel coronavirus” in Wuhan, China, was concerning to the laboratory. However, the CDC had not yet provided guidance to the PHLs to determine what their participation would be.

In late January, NPHL was asked by UNMC campus leadership to begin preparations to provide diagnostic services to detect the “novel coronavirus” for potential management of repatriated Americans from China to the National Quarantine Unit on campus. In preparation, we began to procure the needed laboratory testing materials and in collaboration with Nebraska Medicine laboratory personnel, began to research the WHO assay that had been developed for use in Europe to test for the novel coronavirus, subsequently called the SARS-CoV-2 pathogen.

Early in February, following the declaration of a state of emergency in the U.S., the CDC also released the first Food and Drug Administration-Emergency Use Authorization-approved assay, which meant that testing could commence in the PHLs once the assay was allocated to the laboratories. At this time, NPHL was one of only four laboratories in the U.S. (including the the CDC) that had verified a diagnostic assay to meet regulatory requirements to test for SARS-CoV-2. This assay not only allowed for the NPHL to monitor the repatriated Americans, as well as the exposed cruise line individuals from the Diamond Princess, who eventually were quarantined and treated in our quarantine unit, but also prepare for local testing of this emerging pathogen.

Following original testing of the cruise line travelers, NPHL was monitoring the highest number of COVID-19 infected patients present in the U.S. at that time. For about the first month of the pandemic, NPHL also was the only laboratory in Nebraska to meet regulatory standards to test for COVID-19. Over the first four months of the pandemic, NPHL and the Nebraska Medicine laboratory provided the majority of testing for COVID-19. In the ensuing months, NPHL collaborated with both local and national laboratories to help provide for expansion of testing in the state, which resulted in multiple private laboratories available to assist with COVID-19 diagnostics by mid-summer.

During the latter months of 2020, NPHL has been involved in not only providing high-volume COVID-19 diagnostics to screen and investigate for outbreaks, but also consultation with both local and national laboratories to enhance testing plans as the pandemic continued into 2021.
I was visiting my family for the holidays in late December 2019, when I began to see online chatter about a new virus causing infections in China. In my role as the medical director of the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit (NBU), I constantly scour the media and connect with colleagues regarding novel or recurrent infectious disease threats, so the news from Wuhan immediately piqued my interest. Back at work, meetings began to occur to discuss the new coronavirus and its implications. Given the history of other coronaviruses like SARS-CoV-1 and MERS-CoV, both of which remained relatively contained in their country/regions of origin, it was certainly possible that we would never see a substantial number of cases on U.S. soil. Little did we know that the virus had already infiltrated the U.S. and many other countries.

I have been on the biocontainment team for 11 years. Our team is in a constant state of preparedness, and we knew it was a matter of time before we would be called to duty. In February 2020, a plane full of U.S. citizens living in Wuhan, China, were repatriated and brought to Omaha for quarantine. Shortly thereafter, a group of travelers from the Diamond Princess cruise ship, most of whom were infected with SARS-CoV-2, were flown to Omaha and transported to Nebraska Medicine for evaluation and management. On the day of arrival, we activated the NBU to care for a patient who was experiencing significant symptoms requiring hospitalization. At the time there was little known about the clinical severity, transmissibility, incubation period, therapy or really much else about COVID-19.

The first known case of COVID-19 in Nebraska occurred in March, and the patient was admitted to the NBU. Several other patients followed; we quickly realized that the “containment” phase was gone. The disease was in the community, and our biocontainment unit, the largest in the United States, did not have the capacity to care for the multitude of patients that we knew would be coming. Hospital units were subsequently repurposed for the care of COVID-19 patients, and the hospitalist and critical care teams became the primary teams for patients with COVID-19. At that point, the COVID Infectious Diseases service (COVID ID), initially consisting of only NBU infectious diseases (NBU ID) physicians, was initiated. We served as advisors for all things COVID, taking 24/7 calls to assist treatment teams with testing plans, clinical care, infection control, experimental therapeutics and really anything involving the management of patients with COVID-19. The calls were unrelenting, and the COVID ID service was more intense than any clinical service I’ve ever been involved with at UNMC. Every call and every situation was challenging and new, with little guidance available. All therapies were experimental, the infection control stakes were high, and many times there were no right answers.

In the midst of all of this, we were experiencing surges of cases in the community, and increasing numbers of patients requiring hospitalization. The patients were so sick, and our therapeutic options were limited, especially early in the pandemic. The medical teams did everything in our power to provide the best care possible for our patients, but sometimes it wasn’t enough. It is hard to describe the helpless feeling that a health care worker experiences seeing so much disease and death, but on behalf of my colleagues I can tell you that the pain is real and unforgiving.

Caring for patients was only one part of the equation. The avalanche of misinformation regarding COVID-19 was (and continues to be) overwhelming. My colleagues and I spent significant time combatting misinformation in the media, and particularly on social media, including our personal pages, but it seemed like the ‘fake news’ just kept on coming. So did the barrage of insults and criticisms when we said something that others didn’t agree with. Hearing the notion that “COVID wasn’t real” or was being exaggerated was disturbing and demoralizing. The spread of misinformation and the lack of a national response to COVID-19, resulting in disease and death, has honestly been one of the worst parts of this pandemic. However, I am an optimist by nature, and I am still hopeful that the development and distribution of effective vaccines will get us out of this terrible situation.

When I received the email asking me to schedule my COVID vaccine, I broke down in tears in my office. The mood in the vaccine center was jubilant. It also was wonderful to see my friends and colleagues receive their vaccines. I was so excited that I didn’t even feel the actual shot. I felt hopeful for the first time in a long time.

My colleagues and I are tired and overworked. We have been doing this for so long. But the vaccine has been a ray of light into what has been mostly darkness thus far. Health care workers are known to be strong and resilient, and we will get through this by supporting and relying on each other, helping our community and believing in science.

“The vaccine has been a ray of light into what has been mostly darkness thus far.”

– Angela Hewlett, MD

Angela Hewlett, MD
Associate professor, UNMC Division of Infectious Diseases, and medical director, Nebraska Biocontainment Unit

I was visiting my family for the holidays in late December 2019, when I began to see online chatter about a new virus causing infections in China. In my role as the medical director of the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit (NBU), I constantly scour the media and connect with colleagues regarding novel or recurrent infectious disease threats, so the news from Wuhan immediately piqued my interest. Back at work, meetings began to occur to discuss the new coronavirus and its implications.
As 2020 began, my classmates and I found ourselves in our own form of socially distanced self-isolation: studying for USMLE Step 1. The 10-12 hours each day of self-imposed quarantine were challenging mentally and physically. As February ended, my classmates and I looked forward to the start of our “boots-on-the-ground” medical education—our third-year clerkships.

As you can likely guess, that plan quickly derailed. As our education was paused, for three months students at UNMC looked for ways to fill their time, from volunteering to starting their own non-profit organizations, from bringing home furry companions to putting countless hours on their gaming consoles. With the return to classes in the fall for some and a purely online learning environment for others, 2020 left educators and students seeking new ways to tackle the complexity of health science education.

Returning to rotations at the beginning of July was an anxious time. There still was not a lot known about COVID-19, the U.S. was at the height of social unrest, and for many of us—myself included—we had to relearn some of the aspects of medicine we had been disconnected from for several months. Yet beyond the relearning, we also needed to remain vigilant and aware that COVID-19 was lingering within our community.

From internal medicine to OB/GYN, the differential diagnoses that were drilled into our heads now had a small asterisk to the side: COVID-19. Throughout my pediatrics rotation, I often joked that I morphed into “PPE Vader” for any sick child visit—complete with gown, gloves, goggles and the nasally voice caused by a well-fitting N95 mask. Psychiatry took on new challenges, as chronically ill patients struggled to have family members visit them for a portion of the year. Mental health became a dominant theme for all of us, as we continued to process the pandemic in different ways.

As challenging an experience as 2020 has been, we could not be more fortunate to be at an excellent center that prioritizes education. Here’s to a happy, healthy and vaccinated 2021!
May you live in interesting times,” an old expression tells us—some say it is actually a curse. Well, 2020 was a year that just kept giving “interesting.”

The year was defined by major societal events across our nation: the social and racial awakening; a sharpening political divide around the country; job and food insecurity across the nation; the heroic work of health care workers, teachers and the service sector; raging wildfires; murder hornets; killer caterpillars—and COVID-19.

Zooming became a word, social distancing a well-known phrase, spike protein a household name and masking a way of life. I also recall the unpleasant shortage of toilet paper, soap, hand sanitizer and bacon. I remember lonely holiday events, postponed/cancelled graduations, empty echoes in the hallways and missing a hug from my friends. I also recall anxiously watching the COVID-19 numbers, hoping against hope that they would trend in the right direction.

My biggest frustrations in 2020 were mostly related to national trends: the questioning of COVID-19’s existence by some, the politicizing of mask wearing and infection control measures in our society, the skepticism toward the vaccine and the spread of misinformation.

MMI’s year was a complex mixture of joy, awe and challenges. We were confronted by the need to provide a safe and meaningful way to operate under the dangers of COVID-19; we saw our revenues plummet; we dealt with budget cuts, survived a malicious cyberattack and continued to build our new home.

Yet the challenges were dwarfed by our accomplishments; we continued to dream big. We recruited many new leaders, faculty and staff; established new and expanded existing services; resolved contract issues with insurance providers; managed to build our amazing new home without a delay; protected the jobs of our employees; continued our research endeavors without interruption; designed and started to build our Autism Care for Toddlers in Omaha North (ACTION) Clinic; and developed a strong diversity and inclusivity action plan.

I am most proud of our can-do spirit and ability to nimbly pivot as needed. Multiple examples come to mind. When COVID-19 started, we increased our telehealth services from 5% to 85% in less than two weeks. We were continuously able to provide safe and efficacious essential, in-person services and successfully held our Camp Munroe without virus transmission to patients and providers. While the cyberattack crippled our computer infrastructure, we seamlessly provided all our services—using pen and paper. Our MMI family members bent farther than anyone could have believed possible—and kept on doing their amazing work. Their moral compass was impeccable, always keeping the patient families as our first priority.

All this reaffirmed that it is a pleasure and privilege to be the part of the MMI/UNMC enterprise. If I learned anything in 2020, it is this: The human spirit is indestructible. Ingenuity is limitless. Compassion is immeasurable. And our will is unbreakable.
Thinking of what we learned in 2020 and how this will affect our future, I predict:

- Telehealth is here to stay. It was already a “thing” long before the pandemic, but it hadn’t become a household word for most of us prior to March 2020. We have learned, in many clinical disciplines (perhaps most notably my own, the mental health arena) that telehealth does work. My patients can stay safe in their homes and still have a clinic visit with me. No driving across town (or across the state), no waiting in the waiting room—just crank up your computer. Of course, some people prefer the in-person visit and others simply do not have the resources that many take for granted, like a working computer, reliable connectivity and the technological skills to make it all work. I predict that, after the pandemic, half of my future patient care is done by telehealth.

- Other forms of virtual meetings also will continue after the pandemic. It is efficient to be able to hold a virtual meeting without making everyone drive, park and assemble in the same room. But convenience has its price—we miss out on those valuable and enjoyable minutes of social connection before the meeting. It’ll be interesting to see what percentage of our meetings are going to be “real” versus virtual after the pandemic is over. Half? Less? More?

- Working from home has become a mainstream concept. It has pros and cons, of course, but does offer flexibility for a lot of people. It saves time in commuting, saves gasoline and frees up office space on campus. How, though, will we get our social needs met if we choose to work from home after the pandemic?

- Talking about our mental wellbeing has become normal. How great is that? For far too long, we have had a tendency to put on our game face and reflexively say “Fine” when asked how we are doing. We have finally learned that “It’s OK to not be OK.” This is a major step forward. I have been struck by the honest, authentic vulnerability of so many people at UNMC and Nebraska Medicine who have publicly talked about their own psychological struggles, and I am here to tell you that this makes all the difference. If we can continue to have these kinds of honest dialogues, we will have gotten something positive out of this experience.

- The medical (or health) humanities will take on an even bigger role than in years past. Prior to the pandemic, there was a growing awareness of the tremendous healing power of the humanities to help us deal with difficult emotional experiences. Many people have discovered that if they take part in some form of self-expression, be it performing music, writing poetry or other creative endeavors, they feel better and have a new perspective on life and its struggles. We’ll be depending on lessons learned from our colleagues in the humanities to help us all process the collective grief from 2020. Every single one of us has something to grieve—whether it was the loss of someone close to us or all the graduations, weddings, funerals and other important life events that we had to forego. We need a way to express the sadness of these losses, and the humanities offer a solution.

In closing, one other theme comes to mind—the idea of resilience. This word comes from a Latin term meaning “to bounce back.” I think of a young tree that may get bent in a Nebraska storm, but springs back upright after the storm passes… As a species, we are resilient and we will not only survive, but thrive, from this experience, painful as it has been. That’s my hope and expectation.
Shelly Schwedhelm  
Executive director, emergency preparedness & infection prevention, Nebraska Medicine; and executive director, emergency management and clinical operations, UNMC Global Center for Health Security

Life in 2020 was like looking through a camera lens and constantly zooming in and out to bring it into focus. Emotions ranged from joy to pride to concern to worry to anger to appreciation, and the list goes on. 2020 began with the federal government request to support Americans in Wuhan, China, the epicenter for the COVID-19 outbreak, by providing a place of respite in Nebraska for quarantine until they could move freely back to homes in the United States.

Shortly thereafter, the federal request came to support via quarantine and clinical biocontainment care some of the very first Americans, some with positive COVID-19 from the Diamond Princess Cruise ship. Once these missions concluded safely and successfully, it wasn’t long before cases began to increase in the U.S. As an emergency management person, my role always has been to prepare for the next bad thing. We had a strong pandemic plan we had dusted off and updated, but we knew it would need to be adaptable as we learned more every day about this virus.

Once cases increased in the U.S. and, to our surprise, in the rural areas of Nebraska, 2020 turned into a whirlwind tour across the state. A deployable team from the Global Center for Health Security quickly started conducting site visits across the state to provide technical assistance on mitigation strategies in meatpacking plants, long-term care facilities and shelters to reduce the spread of COVID-19. In many of our visits, we left feeling hopeful but yet helpless. There was a kaleidoscope of emotions: from disappointment that elderly vulnerable adults were getting sick and we couldn’t do more; to comfort and pride in knowing that we trained frontline workers and leaders to more safely navigate their work environments and how to wear their personal protective equipment correctly; to confusion on the changing guidance as we learned day-to-day new things about this virus.

One of the most difficult lessons in life is that less can be more. We had to focus on the most pressing priorities and focus as leaders, which meant removing the clutter which can many days consume and distract us. In 2020, we saw success in our strong focus on safety, improved use of personal protective equipment, optimized use of telehealth and reduction in barriers/walls to better communicate across multiple state stakeholders. I am hopeful we can build on these as we face whatever the next looming crisis will be. 2021 is a year of hope: hope that the pandemic will end as vaccine becomes more available; hope that those who lost loved ones will heal; and hope that we will use what we have learned to make things better for whatever comes next. The camera lens is coming back in to focus.

Sheritta Strong, MD  
Director of inclusion

In accepting the director of inclusion position in 2020, I became UNMC’s face of diversity at a time when our nation faced two pandemics: systemic racism and COVID-19. The big reveal of discrimination and oppression in our nation (after the George Floyd murder) led many people to initiate difficult conversations surrounding racism. Individuals are more willing now to be self-reflective and examine their roles in a racist society. More people understand the need to be actively “anti-racist” versus passively “not racist.” This is important to the mission of the Office of Inclusion, which is to uphold institutional excellence by providing educational and leadership opportunities in a safe environment. We pursue the work today that creates a diverse, unbiased and empowered workforce tomorrow.

I live by three words: faith, hope and love. We must have faith in the processes, hope that things will improve and handle all matters with love and care. As a psychiatrist, my job is to treat emotional health conditions with a goal of improving one’s overall quality of life. I have embraced the diversity role because I can help improve the quality of life of the people at our institution on a larger scale. At the heart of this is the healing that comes from hundreds of years of generational racial trauma.

As I figure out the balance in our post-pandemic new normal, I will use my position to continue to elevate the conversations as the Office of Inclusion expands to a true department of diversity, equity, access, belonging and inclusion that creates a campus environment where everyone feels welcomed.

“We pursue the work today that creates a diverse, unbiased and empowered workforce tomorrow.”

– Sheritta Strong, MD
Gary Yee, PharmD, and his wife, Esther, at Glacier National Park in Montana.

**ONE COVID-19 STORY: AN ‘UNPREDICTABLE VIRUS’**

“My recovery at home has been mostly about getting stronger,” he said in November, noting that he exercises every day, has a physical therapist come in and tries to eat everything he can to regain some of the 35 pounds he lost.

He’s grateful that he was healthy and in good shape when COVID-19 hit him.

Eventually, in the hospital, he was moved to the ICU. His lungs needed high-dose oxygen therapy. He spent time on a CPAP machine.

About a week in, he had trouble breathing in the middle of the night. He remembers the nurse saying if the CPAP doesn’t work, he would have to go on a ventilator. It was scary.

“Just gasping for air is one of the worst feelings I think one can have,” he said. The sensation was almost like drowning.

Thankfully, he avoided the ventilator.

When he shared his story, he was home and out of danger; “it’s just taking time,” he said.

Dr. Yee has seen others with mild, or even asymptomatic cases. “And here I am,” he said, “with a very different course. Take it seriously because you don’t know how this disease is going to affect you. You don’t know if you are going to be the one to experience a more serious course.

“It’s an unpredictable virus.”

In early July, Gary Yee, PharmD, was hiking in Glacier National Park in Montana with his wife, Esther. He climbed mountains, marveled at vistas. He felt strong.

He filled his lungs with crisp, pristine air.

In late July, the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs and leader of the Office of Faculty Affairs started to have some general flu-like symptoms. Some fever, chills, myalgias. “I felt like I was getting a cold,” Dr. Yee said.

He powered through it, handled it at home. But it didn’t get better. Finally, he got a COVID-19 test. Negative. “I was relieved,” Dr. Yee said. But he still didn’t get better. A few days later, he got tested again.

It came back positive.

He was sick, but managing OK. But, by the end of the week, he was worse. Short of breath. He consulted his primary care physician, Mike Sitorius, MD, who only weeks earlier had declared him in “excellent health” during an annual wellness visit. Now, Dr. Yee’s oxygen levels were starting to drop.

He was admitted into the hospital on July 31; he was discharged Sept. 1.

Months later, he still had difficulty breathing.
Leadership during a public health crisis

Lisa Vajgrt-Smith, BSN, PHN, MPH‘13, CPH
Richmond, California

My work related to COVID-19 started in February. In my day-to-day position, I was on call for the Diamond Princess cruise ship helping coordinate regional ambulances and finding beds in the hospitals for the COVID-positive patients. Since then, I’ve floated around to numerous positions. At one point, I was assigned to set up a 250-bed, hospital-like alternate care site for Contra Costa county.

My previous training and experience indicated that I was probably the only person in our county that understood how much of an undertaking coming up with the plan for alternate care sites would be. I am part of the Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) as a deputy team commander, and in this role, we are used to receiving federal resources for natural disasters. With that experience, you become familiar with the resources pushed by the federal and state governments as well as how to be a good liaison to them. With my DMAT experience, I understand how to set up medical care in an austere environment and which components you need to have and which you don’t. With my nursing background, I also had that clinical perspective to know what equipment nurses are going to expect to do their jobs. In addition, the state deployed the National Guard and its resources, and I had the military background to understand how they operate since I did the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program at Creighton. Educationally, my MPH program and Capstone project helped me understand pandemics as well as emergency response roles for a public health department, which include alternate care site spaces and planning.

Luckily, we did shelter in place orders and hadn’t had to use this facility or the others, and FEMA has been doing Project Room Key, which moves people from homeless shelters and into hotel rooms to safely quarantine and isolate. I helped the county understand that we could use the hotel first, and I assisted with writing and implementing that plan. We might need the alternate care site this winter. It’s one of those things that when you don’t have it, you need it, and when you do have it, you never need it. But it’s good we have the resource.

A family physician answers the call to fill in

Mary Jenkins, MD ‘80
Huntington, New York

When COVID hit, obviously all the doctor’s offices closed down. The medical management firm my office belongs to, has urgent cares, probably a dozen throughout Long Island, Queens and Brooklyn, and they wanted people to come help because they were flooded with sick people. I decided I would do it. It wasn’t mandatory. Some doctors preferred to wait for remote appointments, but I decided why not?

I would go wherever I was needed, so I would go online each morning and see which urgent care needed the doctor. At that time, you would go work your time, come home, take off your outerwear in the garage, bleach your shoes, run inside, take a shower, put all your stuff in the laundry, then collapse. We were very cautious and worried—you didn’t eat or drink the whole time while working because you didn’t want to stick a straw up your mask while seeing COVID patients. My husband is retired, and when I would come home, he would have jazz music on and dinner ready. Honestly, that kept me sane.

It was quite the experience, and I don’t think I’ve really had a chance to sit and think about it that much. But all I know is that, as hard as it was, I’m so happy I was able to do it. I feel like I contributed.

“You would go work your time, come home, take off your outerwear in the garage, bleach your shoes, run inside, take a shower, put all your stuff in the laundry, then collapse.”

– Mary Jenkins, MD ‘80

Web Extra: to view supplemental content from these alumni, including videos, visit: http://bit.ly/AlumniStories20.
A physician’s experience as a vaccine trial participant and his role in patient education

David Cantral, MD ’87
Kearney, Nebraska

I was thrilled to participate in a COVID-19 vaccine trial in central Nebraska. While there are some people who are inherently against vaccines, there are many people who simply have anxiety about this particular vaccine because the technology is new. What I’ve tried to focus on is sharing information in discussions with my patients in as simple a way as I can put it. I share with them that the scientific data that supports this vaccine shows it to be safe and effective. Couple that with my own personal experience of what it was like to participate in the vaccine trial, and how I believe that it’s going to be safe and effective over time.

When you take the time to explain to people who are receptive you can allay their fears, especially if you’re someone they trust. To me right now, taking on the educational component is more important, maybe even more so, than taking care of the patients in the hospital. Because we can prevent this disease and we can prevent large numbers of people from getting it. And therefore, we can prevent people from becoming hospitalized and dying. It’s been worth it to spend time educating my patients; through my social media, and in interviews, targeting those who need to be nudged in the direction of trusting and getting the vaccine.

Nurse experiences ER surge early in her career

Eva Brooks, RN, BSN ’16
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

This year has been something I don’t think any nurse had ever planned on experiencing. On March 11, my husband and I had just left Atlanta for Dublin, Ireland, and 15 minutes into the flight, the pilot came on the loudspeaker and said he wanted to let us know that the President was putting travel restrictions on all of Europe. I thought the plane would turn around, but it didn’t. We wouldn’t have taken the trip had we known what was about to unfold. We made it to Dublin and then two days later, everything shut down. It was just a blackout. We ended up making it back home after having to rearrange flights and I’ll tell you, when I came back into the emergency room (ER) for work—it was different than anything I had seen in my time there.

A physician’s account of personal injury sustained in the line of COVID-19 duty

Eric J. Reed, MD ’10
La Mesa, California

It was a regular Tuesday, in April, sort of... I was working in our pediatric outdoor respiratory clinic when I saw a man being escorted from the building to the screening area by our security guard, Wes. Shortly after, I heard a commotion and saw the man attack Wes, who was unconscious on the ground and receiving blows to his head. I got to the left and behind the man, bent down and pushed him up and off Wes. He bounced off the temporary fencing and came at me swinging. I was able to block the punches, but he got up and inside my arms, grabbed my head and shoved it straight down toward the ground. I heard a crack in my neck, my body went limp and I hit the ground.

Lying on the ground on my left side, my arm was completely limp and tingling throughout. Carefully, I rolled to my back, keeping my head in line with my spine. I yelled out, “call 911, I need a C-spine.”

The things that really impacted me during this time was not being able to provide family-centered patient care, internalizing the fact that some of the patients coming in with COVID—this might be the last time they see their family, and the loneliness that people were experiencing. Even those of us working in the ER, we felt alone because we had to stay away from each other. It’s been a lonely time for not only health care workers, but patients and loved ones as well.

In July I transferred to working in the operating room in the adult hospital at Vanderbilt. My last night in the ER was emotional. I was tending to someone who had symptoms of COVID and there was a family of eight people on their phone saying goodbye to a loved one on Zoom. It still gives me goosebumps to think about it.

“IT’s been a lonely time for not only health care workers, but patients and loved ones as well.”

– Eva Brooks, RN, BSN ’16
I had a CT of the thoracic and cervical spine showing a perched facet at C6. An MRI and an MRA showed the vasculature of my neck and my spinal cord of the cervical and thoracic region were completely intact. Following the MHI, I was taken to the surgical intensive care unit, and navigated pain management, which was difficult the first night, but improved on the second day. I was taken to surgery on the third day. The adept surgeon reported that it was much messier inside than it looked like on the images, but he was able to do a full repair.

In October, I was able to remove the neck brace and I was back to the office in November. It has been amazing for me to experience the outpouring of support from all my social and work circles. I am humbled and grateful.

A pharmacist’s experience working with organ transplants during a pandemic

Lisa Potter, PharmD ’01
Chicago, Illinois

I am a pharmacist with the Transplant Institute at the University of Chicago Medicine. Early in the pandemic, our work paused for a couple of days while we made sure that we had the ability to test organ donors, so that we did not transplant COVID-19 into a recipient. Since then, it has been “business as revised” ensuring that patients with end-stage organ failure continue to have access to the organ transplants they need. In order to keep our procurement teams, operating room staff and transplant recipients safe, we make certain that living and deceased donors are tested and confirmed COVID-19 negative. We also provide ongoing care to all our transplant recipients.

We do virtual appointments where possible, but it was a massive shift in our normal routine. There’s also been more competition for hospital beds. Pre-pandemic, what may have warranted hospital admission, now might not qualify for the space. The types of issues that we’re choosing to manage at home, when we might have admitted for some of those things in the past has shifted.

We have had a few recipients test positive for COVID-19, but the bulk of the effort has been encouraging safe living and maintaining this patient cohort in this new health care era. Caring for those with non-COVID-19-related chronic health care needs in the current era is its own type of frontline work.

A PA’s observations of the next generation of health care leaders

Kathleen Connor, PA-C ’00
Seattle, Washington

I serve as a hospitalist at a trauma center where I’m on the surgery team. I don’t go in the operating room, but I do routine procedures at the bedside, take care of patients while they’re in the hospital, and show our residents the ropes and ensure that they get into the operating room knowing what to do.

What has been really inspiring to me is how the residents have hit the ground running. They have been amazing! They came in July and had missed the last three months of their schooling, but their knowledge right out of the gate and how they have managed the calling of the patients and the difficult family dynamics that have come from this—it’s blown my mind. They have absolutely risen to the occasion, especially in the context of starting in a pandemic and of having been deprived of the last three-to-four months of their medical education. That gives me so much optimism for the future of health care and for the leaders they will become.
Virtual Alumni Programming

During the first two-and-a-half months of 2020, the UNMC Alumni Association (UNMCAA) held 10 events, hosting 427 alumni, guests and student attendees—and then the pandemic struck.

In March, the UNMCAA pivoted to offering exclusively virtual programming and engagement opportunities including:

- 37 virtual events with 555 participants and over 25,000 views.
- In partnership with the University of Nebraska Omaha Alumni Association, produced nine Facebook Live events addressing various topics related to COVID-19.
- Each of UNMC’s seven academic deans provided briefings for alumni via Zoom webinars.
- Zoom class reunions were held for alumni who wanted to mark milestone anniversary years.
- Alumni participated in the UNMCAA’s Connections Project Blog located at https://blog.unmc.edu/alumni-association/. The blog is a place for UNMC alumni to share expertise and advice with current students and fellow alumni. Alumni who would like to participate should send an email to alumni@unmc.edu.
- The UNMCAA, along with the UNMC Campus Wellness Program, led by Steve Wengel, MD ’86, ’90, created a video mini-series, the UNMC Talent Treasure Trove [https://bit.ly/UNMCT3-Playlist]. The short videos are meant to provide viewers with a daily dose of positivity, perhaps laughter, helpful insight for life or just a pleasant time-out from the daily norm, all while showcasing the talents of UNMC faculty, staff, students and alumni. To get involved or learn more, send an email to alumni@unmc.edu.

This programming and more is available on the UNMC Alumni Association’s YouTube Channel: http://bit.ly/UNMCAAyoutube

Looking Ahead to 2021

The UNMCAA will launch a new online community for mentoring and networking specifically for UNMC alumni and students. More information about the new platform will be available in the spring of 2021.

If the Alumni Association can safely host in-person events, please save the date for the following alumni reunions:

Alumni Reunion Weekend for the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy & the Graduate Studies Program
- Sept. 17-18, 2021 in Omaha.
- Honor years from 2020 (those ending in 5 and 0) and 2021 (those ending in 6 and 1) will be recognized.

College of Dentistry Alumni Reunion
- Oct. 29-30, 2021, at the Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln.
- All College of Dentistry alumni are invited.
2020 Alumni Awards

The UNMC Alumni Association and its councils recognize alumni and honorary alumni for their meritorious service. In 2020, in-lieu of large gatherings that were postponed due to the pandemic, several Zoom award celebrations took place to recognize awardees. A special website honors the recipients including their photos, biographies and video acceptance remarks: https://bit.ly/UNMCAAawardees20.

Graduate Studies Program

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, (Class of 1993)

Early Career Achievement Award
Sara A. Myers, PhD, (Class of 2011)

Honorary Alumnus Award
Joyce Solheim, PhD

College of Allied Health Professions

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Karen Graulich Stiles, (Clinical Laboratory Science Class of 1978)

College of Pharmacy

Distinguished Alumnus Award
C. David Elm, PhD, (BS Class of 1963)

College of Medicine

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Van E. Vahle, MD, (Class of 1970)

Dedication to Student Excellence Award
Richard E. Jackson, MD, (Class of 1969)

College of Dentistry will announce its 2020 recipients later this year.

Early Career Achievement Award
Daniel M. Hershberger, MD, (Class of 2010)

College of Nursing

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Shelly Schwedhelm, MSN, (BSN 1991)

Nursing Excellence Award
Kosuke Niitsu, PhD, (BSN 2009, MSN 2013, PhD 2017),

Dorothy Patach Spirit of Service Award
Kellee Grimes, MBA, (BSN 2010)

College of Public Health

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Linda Ohri, PharmD, MPH, (Class of 1974, 2008)

Early Career Achievement Award
Jocelyn Herstein, PhD, MPH, (Class of 2016, 2018)

Dorothy Patach Spirit of Service Award
Kellee Grimes, MBA, (BSN 2010)

College of Pharmacy

Distinguished Alumnus Award
C. David Elm, PhD, (BS Class of 1963)

College of Medicine

Distinguished Alumnus Award
Van E. Vahle, MD, (Class of 1970)

Dedication to Student Excellence Award
Richard E. Jackson, MD, (Class of 1969)

Early Career Achievement Award
Daniel M. Hershberger, MD, (Class of 2010)

Honorary Alumnus Award
Sue Pope

UNMC Connect
Karen Honeycutt MLS’84
Omaha, Neb., was named chair of the department of allied health professions education, research and practice, in the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions, effective July 1, 2020. This is in addition to her duties as program director of medical laboratory science education.

Christina Williams MLS’06
Dulles, Va., is a U.S. diplomat serving in Beijing, China, at the U.S. Embassy Health Unit as a regional medical laboratory scientist.

Erie Koziel MLS’10
Omaha, Neb., joined the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions as faculty in the medical laboratory science program in summer 2020.

Lisa Bartenhagen MITS’93
Gree, Neb., was named chair of the department of clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic sciences in the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions, effective July 1, 2020. This is in addition to her duties as program director of radiation therapy.

Tanya Custer MITS’95
Gree, Neb., was named director of distance education for the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions, effective July 1, 2020.

Tammy Webster MITS’00, GS’18
Gree, Neb., was named assistant dean for academic affairs in the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions, effective July 1, 2020. This is in addition to her duties as program director of radiography, computed tomography and cardiovascular interventional technology.

Alisha Wright MITS’04, HPTT ’20
Kearney, Neb., received the 2020 Excellence in Clinical Teaching Award from the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions. She served as a radiographer at Good Samaritan Hospital (now CHI Health Good Samaritan) for 16 years and, in fall 2020, joined the faculty in the college on the Kearney campus as an assistant professor and clinical education coordinator for radiography and computed tomography.

Karen Keller MLS’78
Omaha, Neb., retired from Nebraska Medical Sonography in December 2019 after 41 years. She spent 28 of those years as an adjunct instructor in the UNMC medical technology, now medical laboratory science program teaching hematology and coagulation to future generations of MLS students.

Joel Schwartzkopf PA’06
Pullman, Wash., began a new position as the executive director of Cougar Health Services for the Washington State University system in October 2020.

Andrea Wolfe PA’08, ’09
Honolulu, Hawaii, retired from the U.S. Army in 2020 after 28 years of service.

Arlene Obazee PA’11
Richmond, Ill., completed her doctorate in leadership health services from Walden University in 2018. In January 2020, her first grandchild was born to her son and daughter-in-law.

Madison Nutter PA’19
Malcom, Neb., joined the York Medical Clinic in July 2020 and sees patients in the quick care clinic.

Wayne Stubbs PT’77, MS’80, GS ’89
Omaha, Neb., retired from UNMC at the end of 2020 and transitioned to the status of emeritus professor. He served the university for more than 30 years, most recently as the director of the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, director of clinical services and associate director of the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

Audrey Cassel PT’78
Lincoln, Neb., retired in May 2019.

Jim Hain PT’78
Johnson Lake, Neb., retired on May 22, 2020, and feels fortunate for the relationships he built and experiences he had throughout his 42-year career.

Cheryl Moody PT’80
Denver, Colo., has earned several certifications over the years, including a doctorate of physical therapy, board certified pediatric specialist, certified in neonatal touch and massage and certified neonatal therapist.

Kasey Murphy PT’12
Odel, Neb., earned the professional designation of board certified pediatric clinical specialist by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties in 2020. She has practiced at the Beatrice Community Hospital since 2012.

Emily Crowe PT’13
Omaha, Neb., began working in acute care at Methodist Hospital in August 2018. She and her husband Brody Crowe P’14 welcomed their son Max in April 2018 and their son Sam in September 2020.
Ann Kastrup PT’16
Scottsbluff, Neb., and her husband Ross Kastrup P’17 are expecting a baby in March 2021.

Jerod Post PT’16
Canon City, Colo., practices primarily in an outpatient rural rehabilitation setting and also is an athletic trainer for a local high school.

Jena Mizner PT’17
Grand Island, Neb., practices at Balance Mobility Aquatic Therapy Center and recently completed aquatic certification through the Aquatic Therapy & Rehab Institute. She is one of only two certified aquatic therapy providers in central Nebraska.

Abbi Ebel PT’20
Wisner, Neb., is employed at Franciscan Healthcare in West Point, Neb.

Katie Leymaster PT’20
Ainsworth, Neb., joined the Brown County Hospital in summer 2020.

**Medicine**

Douglas Harris, M’62
Surprise, Ariz., is retired. He became a member of the UNMC College of Medicine Edward A. Holoyoke Society in 2020, and is a veteran of the U.S. Army.

James Mouser M’62, ’64
Phoenix, Ariz., has an award named after him at the Creighton University School of Medicine—Phoenix Regional Campus: the James Mouser Excellence in Teaching Award.

Doyt Conn M’63
Rochester, Minn., received the honorary doctorate of science degree during UNMC’s 2020 commencement ceremony. A professor emeritus at Emory University School of Medicine, he retired after 25 years at the Mayo Clinic, then served three years as senior vice president for medical affairs for the National Arthritis Foundation. That was followed by a full-time appointment as clinician, scientist and educator at the Emory University School of Medicine, and Grady Health Systems in Atlanta, the fifth-largest public hospital in the U.S.

Paul Nelson M’65, ’67, ’69
Omaha, Neb., retired in 2016 after 41 years as a primary care physician with a small group, private practice in northwest Omaha.

James Lynn Casey M’69
Overland Park, Kan., retired as chief of pediatric endocrinology at the University of Kansas in 2020.

Stuart Embury M’69
Holdrege, Neb., retired in January 2020.

Janet Gilsdorf M’70

Thomas Novotny M’73
San Diego, Calif., is retired, but still doing tobacco research.

Dean Thomson M’73
Nebraska City, Neb., and his wife Keitha celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 19, 2020.

John Walburn M’73, P’69
Omaha, Neb., retired in summer 2020, after 44 years of practicing medicine.

Evan Evans M’74
East Amherst, N.Y., retired in July 2020.

Jack Hornby M’74
Kalispell, Mont., retired from the practice of child and adolescent psychiatry in 2018. He lives in the foothills outside of Glacier National Park and spends most of the seasons hiking and climbing. He winters in Escalante and the adjacent Utah/Arizona desert areas. He has two children and five grandchildren.

Maynard Belzer M’75
Camarillo, Calif., is retired and has a new golden retriever puppy, Molly.

David Little M’75
Hastings, Neb., retired at the end of July 2020 after practicing for 42 years at Hastings Internal Medicine Associates, which he co-founded with James W. Hervert Jr. MD ’75, in 1978.

Alan Sooho M’75
West Newton, Mass., still regularly sees his classmate David Yoburn M’75—a friendship that has stayed strong since medical school, no matter how far apart they have lived. It is nice that now they only live a few miles apart.

Bruce Elliott M’77
Wadmalaw Island, S.C., joined the faculty at the Medical University of South Carolina in 1986 and was a member of, or chair of multiple hospital, college and university committees during his tenured professorship. He was involved in the Association of American Medical Colleges, is a fellow in the American College of Surgeons, a distinguished fellow in the Society for Vascular Surgery and was the founding chair of its conflict-of-interest committee. He retired from MUSC on Jan. 1, 2018, and, prior to the pandemic, was enjoying international travel, as well as diving, golf and grandchildren.

Thomas McKnight M’77
Fremont, Neb., virtually presented, via Zoom, the inaugural McKnight Prize for Healthcare Outbreak Heroes Award in October 2020. The award was presented in partnership by the Evelyn and Thomas McKnight Family Fund for Patient Safety, Creighton University and the CDC Foundation. The award honors and recognizes people who are doing important work to promote safe injection practices or patient safety.

James O’Dell M’77
Omaha, Neb., received the American College of Rheumatology’s highest award, the Presidential Gold Medal, in November 2020.

Debra Mostek M’79, Geriatrics ’01
Omaha, Neb., retired in June 2020 after a 20-year career at UNMC. She joined in 1999, taking part in a two-year geriatric fellowship after a 17-year career in family medicine. After the fellowship, she became a member of the geriatrics faculty. In retirement, she plans to volunteer and spend time with her grandchildren.

Steven Williams M’79, Family and General Medicine ’82
Omaha, Neb., has been elected to serve as president of the Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians. The NAFP serves over 1,300 family physician members across the state.

Dale Hansen M’80, Internal Medicine and Cardiology ’85
Lincoln, Neb., practiced as an interventional cardiologist with Bryan Heart in Lincoln since 1989 and retired at the end of 2020. In retirement, he and his wife Sandy Hansen N’76, M’82, Pediatrics ’85 look forward to driving cross country to visit their three daughters and five grandchildren.

Mary Jenkins M’80
Huntington, N.Y., has been in practice on Long Island for 35 years and joined ProHealth 12 years ago. When the pandemic hit, she worked in ProHealth Urgent Cares in Queens and Long Island seeing outpatient COVID-19 patients.

Kent Kronberg M’80 ’83
Elykorn, Neb., retired from practice at Children’s Physicians in April 2020. He and his wife, Kim, plan to remain in Omaha.

James Linder M’80
Omaha, Neb., has had a busy year as Nebraska Medicine has been on the front lines nationally in the care of COVID-19 patients. As CEO, he is grateful to all of the employees, many of whom are UNMC alumni, for their work. Personally, he received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Iowa State University and he and his wife, Karen, were inducted into the Omaha Business Hall of Fame for their work in the community.

Deborah Lindquist M’80
Flagstaff, Ariz., retired in April 2019 after more than 30 years in oncology/hematology in Sedona. She is now doing locum work.

Timothy Stivins M’80
Lincoln, Neb., retired in December 2020 after almost 41 years as a primary care internist in Nebraska.

Tari Ernst M’81
Stephen Raynor M’81
Omaha, Neb., is board certified in pediatric and general surgery and is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Surgeons.

Rebecca Reilly M’81
Omaha, Neb., practices at Think Whole Person Healthcare and is board certified in internal medicine and geriatrics.

Jon Sanchez M’82
Lexington, Ky., is retired from private practice.

Dick Slater M’82
Omaha, Neb., retired in June 2020 after 15 years at UNMC.

Luanne Thorndyke M’83
Shrewsbury, Mass., became executive vice dean at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California in July 2020. She also is vice provost for faculty affairs at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, a position she has held for 10 years.

Robert Muelleman M’84
Omaha, Neb., retired from UNMC in June 2020 after 22 years.

Eddie Pierce M’84
Lincoln, Neb., is partly retired and now works at the Lincoln Medical Education Partnership part time.

Marjorie (Marjie) Heier M’86, Family and General Medicine ‘89
Sioux Falls, S.D., returned to the U.S. from Africa and accepted a position to teach at the Sioux Falls family medicine residency program. She continues to volunteer at Chifundo Rural Health Center, a rural clinic that operates within the Ministry of Health in Zambia; she hopes to return to teach and volunteer in August 2021 with residents for a global health rotation.

Charlie Shafer M’86
Sioux Falls, S.D., had his poem “Leah’s Eyes” selected for publishing in The Pharos, the quarterly journal of Alpha Omega Alpha.

Barbara Bruton M’87
Carson, Calif., owns and operates Opulent Health and Wellness, Inc., in Marina del Rey. Her background is in internal medicine, but she has always had an interest in psychiatry and addictive disorders and is board certified through the American Boards of Internal Medicine, Addiction Medicine, and Preventive Medicine. She is a fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, as well as a member of the American Medical Association, the California Society of Addiction Medicine, the American Academy of Pain Medicine, the National Lipid Association, the New York Academy of Science, the Los Angeles County Medical Association and the Butte-Glenn Medical Society.

David Cantral M’87, Pulmonology ‘94
Kearney, Neb., began seeing patients at the Harlan County Health System in December 2020 as a visiting pulmonologist.

Jeffrey Cooper M’87 ’88
Omaha, Neb., is the director of hyperbaric medicine and an associate professor of emergency medicine at UNMC.

Tracy Dorheim M’87
Kahului, Hawaii, joined the cardiothoracic surgery department at the Kaiser Permanente Honolulu Medical Office in June 2020. He was previously at the Maui Memorial Medical Center as a principal cardiac surgeon.

Mark Fleisher M’87, Psychiatry ’91
Omaha, Neb., retired from UNMC in June 2020 after 29 years.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Wickstrom M’87
Prairie Village, Kan., started a new practice in January 2020 in the greater Kansas City area seeing high-risk OB patients in a consultation-only practice. Her older daughter earned her second college degree in May 2020 and was married in February 2021; her younger daughter began her third year of medical school in Kansas in May 2020.

Roxanna Alter MS ’91
Omaha, Neb., retired from UNMC in October 2020 after 37 years of service.

Louise Winter M’91
Papillion, Neb., is the owner of Midwest Minor Medical, three urgent care clinics in Omaha, established in 1982 and under new management since January 2020.

James Malone III M’92 ’95, Internal Medicine ’98
Atascadero, Calif., helped select, design and establish a COVID-19 alternate care site for San Luis Obispo County and is serving as co-medical director for the facility. He recently returned from a fourth deployment with the U.S. Army Reserves in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Laura Peter M’93
Eleva, Wis., worked as an undersea medical officer and general medical officer in the U.S. Navy from 1995-2003. She completed physical medicine and rehabilitation residency in 2007. She got married in 1997 and has three daughters: Emily, Megan and Isabel. She retired from medical practice in 2014.

Pamela Kohlmeier M’95
Spokane, Wash., graduated from Gonzaga University School of Law in 2018 and became dual licensed as a physician and attorney in Washington. She is a lecturer-MPH at Eastern Washington University, where she teaches on health law and professionalism. She also serves as a physician-attorney member on the local health district’s ethics committee, in addition to two scarce resource/COVID-related committees; crisis standard of care regional triage team and disaster clinical advisory committee.

Carey Buresh M’94, Pathology ’99
Dallas, Texas, was named director of the immunohistochemistry division at ProPath—one of the most sophisticated specialty laboratories in the country. He has been a member of the team there since 2002.

Michael Grier M’94, P’89

Monica Grier M’94
is a partner in diagnostic radiology, where she is one of two UNMC-graduated musculoskeletal radiologists and also is the head of mammography at AnMed Health. They have two daughters and a son and have lived in Anderson over 20 years.

Preston Klassen M’94
San Diego, Calif., was appointed president and chief executive officer of Metacrine, Inc., in June 2020. He was previously executive vice president, head of research and development at Arena Pharmaceuticals.

Scott Kohtz M’94
Winterville, N.C., has worked in primary care at a VA Clinic in Greenville, N.C., since 2015. This past year, he became medical director for their home-based primary care program, which involves supervising a multidisciplinary team that assists home-bound veterans. He is in the process of expanding the program.

Christine Jeffrey M’95
Omaha, Neb., practices at Think Whole Person Healthcare and also is the medical director at Mercy Villa and Quality Living, Inc. She is board certified in family medicine.

Donald Schmidt M’96, Internal Medicine ‘99
Gretna, Neb., became the vice president of medical affairs and chief medical officer at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals in October 2020. He previously practiced at Nebraska Internal Medicine for 11 years and prior to that served as a hospitalist and later as medical director for the hospitalist program at CHI Health St. Elizabeth. He also serves on the board of directors for OneHealth Nebraska.

Kim Tjaden M’96
Sartell, Minn., earned a master’s in public health in 2018 and was named Minnesota Family Physician of the Year in 2019.

Deborah Clements M’97 Family Medicine ‘99
Highland Park, Ill., was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society at the Northwestern University School of Medicine and was appointed as chair of the Council of Academic Family Medicine.

Anne Perlman, M’97
Lincoln, Neb., celebrated her three-year anniversary as the medical director for Old Cheney Rehabilitation. Previously, she worked as a hospitalist for 18 years at CHI Health, including a decade as the medical director of St. Elizabeth’s inpatient-medical service.
Neena Will M’03, Obstetrics and Gynecology ’01
Omaha, Neb., practices at Mid-City Ob-Gyn and focuses on DaVinci robotic surgery, minimally invasive surgery, in-office gynecologic procedures, and general obstetrics and gynecology.

Reg Hagge M’98, Family Medicine ’01
Valentine, Neb., moved back to Valentine from Wyoming, in spring 2020 and joined the Cherry County Hospital and Clinic.

Jonathan Richman, M’98
Delta, Colo., and his wife Rachell Richman, D’00 recently moved to the western slopes of Colorado from Imperial, Neb. He now practices at Delta Family Medicine.

Jennifer Bengston M’00, Family & General Medicine ’03
Ord, Neb., was named Valley County Health System chief of staff in July 2020 and will serve a one-year term. She joined VCHS in 2003 and provides primary care to patients in Ord, as well as to hospital inpatients and emergency room patients as needed.

Kelly Caverzagie M’01, Internal Medicine ’05
Omaha, Neb., was selected to the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education Board of Directors for a three-year term.

Michael Griess M’01, Ophthalmology ’05
West Fargo, N.D., practices at the Essentia Health South University Clinic in Fargo. Previously, he served on the faculty at UNMC and the University of Iowa.

Deepak Madhavan M’01
Omaha, Neb., is board certified in psychiatry and neurology and serves as the pediatric neuroscience medical director at Boys Town National Research Hospital.

Kari Simonsen M’01
Elkhorn, Neb., was appointed chair of the UNMC Department of Pediatrics in April 2020. She also continues to serve as pediatrician-in-chief and senior vice president of pediatric services for Children’s Hospital and medical director of Children’s Physicians in Fairbury, Neb.

Kathleen Brennan M’04
Los Angeles, Calif., has been the director of in vitro fertilization and assisted reproduction at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) since 2014. She was appointed as the reproductive endocrinology and infertility (REI) fellowship program director in 2018 and the interim REI division head in 2019.

Sheritta Strong M’04, Psychiatry ’08
Omaha, Neb., was named director of inclusion for UNMC on July 1, 2020. She also serves as an assistant professor in the department of psychiatry.

Elizabeth Barkoudah M’04
Brookline, Mass., is the associate program director of the neurodevelopmental disabilities residency at Boston Children’s Hospital and took over as program director in July 2020. She also is the co-director of the Cerebral Palsy and Spasticity Center.

Charles Harper Jr. M’05, Internal Medicine ’08
Norfolk, Neb., joined the Yankton Medical Clinic at their Norfolk location inside the Fountain Point Medical Community facility in March 2020.

Elizabeth Hartman M’05
Omaha, Neb., joined the department of neurological sciences at UNMC in June 2020 and sees patients at three Nebraska Medicine clinic locations in the Omaha metro area. Her husband, Herb Hartman, III M’06, joined Heart Consultants with Methodist Physicians Clinic as a non-invasive general cardiologist.

Kate Shafto M’06
Minneapolis, Minn., completed an integrative medicine fellowship in 2017 and became board certified in 2018. Her current practice (before COVID-19) is at Hennepin Healthcare—Integrative Pain Management and she is a course director for the University of Minnesota Medical School M1-M2 course, Foundations of Critical Thinking.

Melissa St. Germain M’06, Pediatrics ’09
Omaha, Neb., was named vice president and medical director of Children’s Physicians and Children’s Urgent Care in fall 2020. She continues to see patients at the West Village Pointe location two days a week.

Rebecca Bowen M’07
Lincoln, Neb., began visiting Jefferson Community Health & Life Outpatient Services in Fairbury, Neb., as an otolaryngology-head and neck surgery specialist in June 2020. Before returning to Nebraska, she completed her residency in Louisiana and practiced for five years in Texas.

Casey Bowen M’08
Lincoln, Neb., and Gina Weir M’10 opened a new practice, Dermatology Associates of Lincoln.

Anpo Charging Thunder M’08
Gordon, Neb., welcomed three new grandchildren this year from three of her six children. In all, she has seven grandchildren.

Kathryn Hutchins M’08, Internal Medicine ’11, Gastroenterology ’14
Omaha, Neb., joined UNMC in spring 2020 as an assistant professor in internal medicine, in the division of gastroenterology and hepatology. She also practices at Nebraska Medicine’s multispecialty clinic at Village Pointe Health Center.

Wendy Reeves M’09
Beatrice, Neb., practices obstetrics and gynecology at Beatrice Community Hospital Women’s and Children’s Clinic and, on a monthly basis, also sees patients at Jefferson Community Health & Life in Fairbury, Neb.

Phillip Guillet M’10
Stony Brook, N.Y., completed an orthopedic surgery residency at Loma Linda and a hand fellowship in New York. He now lives on Long Island with his wife Alexa and their three children. They enjoy camping, boating and fishing.

Kathy Schall M’10
Omaha, Neb., joined the Boys Town pediatric general and thoracic surgery team in September 2020.

Jill Gulizia M’11
Amarillo, Texas, has been with Women’s Healthcare Associates in obstetrics and gynecology since 2015.

Samuel David M’12
Omaha, Neb., joined the UNMC faculty in 2020 as an assistant professor, department of surgery-urolologic surgery.

Jaime Seeman M’12, Obstetrics & Gynecology ’16
Elkhorn, Neb., runs a successful online nutrition business, Doctor Fit & Fabulous. She competed on NBC Titan Games Season 2 with the Rock, which premiered in May 2020.

Joshua Wewel M’12
Atlanta, Ga., joined Atlanta Brain and Spine Care in May 2020. He cares for patients with nearly all spinal pathologies and he treats them at Piedmont Atlanta Hospital, the Shepherd Center and a variety of outpatient clinics. He enjoys spending time with his wife, Marissa.

A. Tyler Haussler M’13
Holdrege, Neb., joined the Family Medical Specialties Practice in Holdrege in August 2020, where he provides internal medicine services to patients. After residency in 2016, he served from 2018-2020 as the medical director of internal medicine for the U.S. Air Force, 673rd Medical Group at Joint Base Elmendorf in Richardson, Alaska.
Kendra Luebke M’13
Omaha, Neb., joined ENT Specialists, PC in 2018 as an adult and pediatric ear, nose and throat specialist. In October 2020, she also began seeing patients on a monthly basis at the Brodstone Hospital Specialty Clinic in Superior, Neb.

Jordan Warchole Brown M’13, Emergency Medicine ‘16
Omaha, Neb., was named one of the Emergency Medicine Residents’ Association “25 Under 45” in 2020. She has served as an assistant professor in the UNMC department of emergency medicine since 2018.

Michael Bokemper M’14
Lincoln, Neb., practices at Lincoln Orthopaedic Center.

Corey Georgesen M’14
Omaha, Neb., joined the UNMC faculty in 2020 as an assistant professor in the dermatology department in the College of Medicine. He is a dermatologist, dermatopathologist and telemedicine specialist. He enjoys spending time with his wife, Minji; dog, Wilson; and other family and friends.

Peter Simone M’14, GS’12
Omaha, Neb., joined illumin eye care of Omaha in summer 2020. He also sees patients at the Community Medical Center Specialty Clinic in Falls City, Neb., once a month. He and his wife Laura Simone GS’11 have two daughters and a dog.

Jennifer Inbarasu M’15
Omaha, Neb., joined Boys Town Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in August 2020. She practices at the Lakeside Clinic and Boys Town Medical Campus—Pacific Street Clinic. Her husband, Jery Inbarasu M’15, practices with Momenta Pain Care and sees patients at the Memorial Community Hospital & Health System’s Specialty Clinic.

Kristen Jackson M’15
Dallas, Texas, completed an endocrinology fellowship at Johns Hopkins Hospital and joined Baylor Scott & White Endocrinology Specialists in Dallas.

Kelsey LaPorte M’16, Oral Surgery ‘17

Christian Berg M’17
Omaha, Neb., practices at Inpatient Physician Associates in Lincoln.

Cade Craig M’17
Minden, Neb., practices at Kearney County Health Services alongside his brother John (Andy) Craig M’13.

Benjamin Cross M’17
Lawrence, Kan., joined Lawrence Emergency Medical Associates in July 2020.

Alexis Erbst M’17
Aurora, Neb., joined the Memorial Health Clinic in Aurora in fall 2020.

Kayla Heidinger M’17
Omaha, Neb., joined Syracuse Area Health as a family practice provider in August 2020. She sees patients at both the Syracuse and Weeping Water clinics.

Matt Sexton M’17, MLS’08
Lexington, Neb., joined the Family Medicine Specialist Clinic with Lexington Regional Health Center in August 2020.

Samantha Sholes M’17
Omaha, Neb., joined West Holt Medical Services as a primary care physician and began seeing patients in fall 2020.

Residency

David Crockett, Internal Medicine and Hematology/Oncology Fellowship ’16
Grand Island, Neb., practices at CHI Health Regional Cancer Center at Good Samaritan and sees patients at various locations in the region.

Scott Lundgren, Internal Medicine ’16, Cardiovascular Disease ’19
Omaha, Neb., joined the faculty at UNMC in 2020, as an assistant professor in the department of internal medicine, division of cardiology.

Tim Dorius, Internal Medicine and Hematology/Oncology Fellowship ’17
Omaha, Neb., practices at Oncology Associates and is the principal investigator for several clinical research trials at Methodist Hospital.

Erik Bowman, Orthopedics ’19
Boulder, Colo., joined Boulder Centre for Orthopedics & Spine in 2020, where he sees patients in Boulder and Lafayette.

Carlos Cunha, Family Medicine ’19
South Dundas, Ontario, Canada, joined the St. Lawrence Medical Clinic in Morrisburg in July 2020.

Todd Gilbert, Orthopedics ’19
Provo, Utah, joined Revere Health in November 2020 as an orthopedic surgeon.

Tyler Larson, Orthopedics ’19
Duluth, Minn., joined Essentia Health in November 2020 as an orthopedic surgeon.

John Everardo Villasenor, Family Medicine ’19
Henderson, Nev., practices at Southwest Medical Siena Heights Healthcare Center in Henderson.

Tyler Bliss, Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery ’20
Grand Island, Neb., practices at Grand Island Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) and, in fall 2020, also began seeing patients at Boone County Health Center’s ENT Specialty Clinic two times per month. He is fluent in both Portuguese and Spanish.

Madeline Jones-Ryan, Endocrinology ’20
Lincoln, Neb., joined Complete Endocrinology in fall 2020.

Natraj Katta, Interventional Cardiology ’20
Lincoln, Neb., joined Bryan Heart in August 2020 as an interventional cardiologist.

Danika Peterson, Family Medicine ’20
Holdrege, Neb., joined Phelps Medical Group in fall 2020.

Nursing

Delores Holben-Tegtmeier N’62
Athens, Ga., completed her Master of Science in nursing at the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1965 and her PhD in nursing education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1991. She taught in all areas, but her specialty was maternal and newborn. She is retired.

Cyd Graff N’70
Cedar Falls, Iowa, retired in November 2020 after working 50 years in nursing. She received her master’s in pediatric nursing in 1986 and post master’s certification as a psychiatric nurse practitioner in 2005. She has practiced in hospitals in Iowa, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and worked as a special education nurse in mental health practice. She also has served as a pediatric and psychiatric nurse practitioner. She has three children and three grandchildren.

Connie Hyde N’74
Hastings, Neb., retired in 2016 and now works as a parish nurse at her church and as RN oversight at an assisted living facility. Her sons, both physicians, live in Michigan and Florida.

Virginia Anders-Ellmore N’76
Newport Beach, Calif., is retired.

Bunny Pozehl N’76, ’78, ’83
Gretta, Neb., is director of the UNMC College of Nursing adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner program; a tenured professor and holds the Dorothy Hodges Olson Endowed Chair in Nursing. In October 2020, she received the Heart Failure Society of America’s Nursing Research Leadership Award for extraordinary achievement and excellence in nursing that improves outcomes of patients with heart failure. In December 2020, she received the Distinguished Nurse of the Year Award by the March of Dimes.
Donna Hubbell N’84
Omaha, Neb., retired in July 2020 after over 47 years at Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital in Council Bluffs. Most recently, she served as vice president of patient safety and quality and oversaw the cancer center since 2012.

Robert Kroeger N’84
Lincoln, retired in September 2020 after 17 years at UNMC.

Kathy Prue-Owens N’85
Colorado Springs, Colo., serves as an assistant professor of nursing in the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs College of Nursing and Health Sciences and, in February 2020, was appointed to the UHealth Memorial Term Chair, where she works to advance the implementation of evidence-based practices in local hospitals. She will serve in the role for three years. She is a retired Army Nurse Corps officer and mentors nurses while they complete their unit-based project or research study.

Jodell Yank, N’94, ’08, ’12
Lincoln, Neb., recently became the executive director and advanced practice registered nurse at Family Health Services, Inc., a family planning clinic serving the Lincoln and southeast Nebraska area.

Tina Vest N’95, ’01
Lincoln, Neb., is an advanced practice registered nurse and the CEO of Vest Psychiatric Services, which serves counties in Nebraska and Colorado via telehealth. She is in her fifth-year teaching as a guest lecturer at the Union College physician assistant program and she provides preceptorship for psychiatric nurse practitioner students.

Ann Young N’96, ’00, ’15
Lexington, Neb., received the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska 2020 Champion Award for her outstanding service and behavioral outreach in the community. She has been an advanced practice registered nurse specializing in family medicine in Lexington since 2000 and in 2015, completed a post master’s certificate in psychiatric mental health nursing. She is both a mental health nurse practitioner and the hospitalist for Lexington Regional Health Center.

Jacquie Montag N’99
Omaha, Neb., in her career capstone, is working to ensure underserved populations receive medical treatment consistent with standards and best care practices.

Beth Beam N’00, ’04, ’14
Omaha, Neb., received the 2020 William Rutala Scholarship from the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America.

Annette Dillon N’00
Elkhorn, Neb., is retired.
Jayme Weber N’11
Kearney, Neb., became a clinical instructor in the UNMC College of Nursing Kearney Division as an instructor in summer 2020.

David Herrenrader N’12
Lincoln, Neb., recently completed a Master of Science in nursing program and passed the American Academy of Nurse Practitioner family nurse practitioner board exam.

Erica Dom N’13
Upland, Neb., is a nurse practitioner with the Franklin County Memorial Hospital and sees patients at the Pool Medical Clinic. She and her husband Cody have two boys.

Vanessa Schott N’14
De Soto, Kan., received her PhD in educational leadership and policy studies with a focus on simulation in 2018 from the University of Kansas. She serves as director of virtual simulation at MidAmerica Nazarene University.

Angela Salazar N’15, ’19
Columbus, Neb., practices as a women’s health nurse practitioner at OneWorld Community Health Centers and is expecting her first child.

Tyler Sherman N’15, ’19
Red Cloud, Neb., is a family nurse practitioner at the Webster County Community Hospital.

Courtney Mahony N’17
Kearney, Neb., joined CHI Health Clinic: Internal Medicine & Specialty Care in Kearney in summer 2020. She is a board-certified family medicine nurse practitioner.

Alicia Rogers N’17
Omaha, Neb., is an intensive care unit and certified critical care nurse as well as a clinical instructor for UNMC. She was the recipient of a DAISY Award in 2011.

Rebecca Kahrs N’19
Republican City, Neb., is a nurse practitioner with the Franklin County Memorial Hospital and sees patients at the Pool Medical Clinic. She and her husband Kelen have two daughters.

Lillian Simpson N’20
Kearney, Neb., is a nurse practitioner at CHI Health Regional Cancer Center at Good Samaritan. She and her husband Luke have two children.

Pharmacy
Mary Hellman Cone P’77
Paxton, Neb., recently stepped down after serving 10 years as the Ogallala Community Blood Drive Coordinator. She is retired from pharmacy but continues to enjoy ranch life and riding horses.

Kathryn Labbe P’78
Mesa, Ariz., and her husband Carl, both retired in August 2019 after more than 40 years in retail pharmacy. She received the Arizona Bowl of Hygeia in 2013, worked as an enumerator for the U.S. Census Bureau’s Decennial Census and volunteered with the Maricopa County Department of Health Services, assisting in an array of services associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Their son, Douglas, was married in December 2019, and they are enjoying spending more time with their daughter, Gina.

Staci Hubert P’94
Gretta, Neb., received the 2020 CPESN® Luminary-of-the-Year Award. She is pharmacist and owner of Ashland Pharmacy and is the lead luminary for CPESN® Nebraska or Nebraska Enhanced Services in Pharmacies as it is known locally.

Robin McCready P’99
Fruita, Colo., retired from the U.S. Air Force in July 2020. She was active duty for 10 years and a reservist for over 11 years.

Steven Boyd P’00
Natchitoches, La., has a pharmacy benefit management company, Southern Scripts, that is growing nationally and now covers over 500,000 lives.

Elizabeth Neal P’07
McCook, Neb., has practiced in McCook for the past 13 years at Community Hospital and part time at U-Save. In summer 2020, she joined the U-Save Pharmacy full time. She and her husband Tyler have two children.

Greg Schardt P’09
Papillion, Neb., joined the team of Genentech in 2020 and serves as a business engagement manager for the Nebraska, South Dakota and Iowa region. The company is based out of San Francisco.

Rachel Daly P’12
Elm Creek, Neb., owns her own practice, Innovative Rx Pharmacy. In November 2020, she received the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Award presented by Connecting Young Nebraskans and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Annie Trosper P’12
Murray, Neb., is the pharmacist in charge at the Chief Drug Store in Tecumseh. She joined the team there in fall 2020. One of the owners of the pharmacy is Colby Haynes P’13.

Public Health
Shirley Delair PH ’12, ’14
Omaha, Neb., was appointed as the UNMC College of Medicine’s first associate dean of diversity, equity and inclusion on Nov. 1, 2020. She also serves as an associate professor of pediatrics and chief of the UNMC division of pediatric infectious diseases. She is working on her PhD in clinical and translational research. In September 2020, she completed the Association of American Medical Colleges healthcare executive diversity and inclusion certificate program.

Dentistry
Mark Kampoe D’71, ’79
Rapid City, S.D., retired in 2019 from clinical practice. He is still involved in organized dentistry through the American Dental Association Council on Membership and as an ADA Delegate from the South Dakota Dental Association. He enjoys retirement and golf.

Daniel Dymerski D’72
Littleton, Colo., practiced in Colorado from 1974-2010. He and his wife Sharon spend seven months in Arizona each year, but their granddaughter brings them back to Colorado often. He enjoys golf and gardening.

Thomas Luedtke D’73
Elkhorn, Neb., retired in June 2020 after 45 years of private practice in David City, Neb.

Al Bird D’74
University Place, Wash., has practiced with his son for 15 years. He hopes to fully retire soon, but still works part-time.

Kenneth Tusha D’82
Creighton, Neb., has practiced in Verdigre, Neb., since 1984. In 1994, he purchased a practice in Bloomfield, Neb., and sees patients in both locations.
Joyce Simmons D’83, ’86
Spearfish, S.D., retired in 2015 from her orthodontic practice in Valentine, Neb. Since then, she has moved to Spearfish and is enjoying the Black Hills.

Jeane Best D’84
Denver, N.C., is retired and loving it.

Richard Carr (Dentistry Certifications ’87, ’95, ’07)
Eagle Rock, Mo., moved to a lakeside community after living in Las Vegas, Nevada, since 1987. The trout fishing, neighbors and mild year-round weather are hard to beat.

Jerome Holbrook D’87
Tucson, Ariz., sold his private practice and has transitioned to a part-time associate position at Arizona Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery.

Casey Burns-Schmidt D’05
Recently finished a four-year tour at the Marine Corps Air Station in Iwakuni, Japan as the sole orthodontist and officer-in-charge. She has started a third tour in Japan at the Naval Hospital Yokosuka in the Dental Specialties Department, Orthodontic Division.

Chris Wenburg D’06
Kansas City, Mo., moved from Durango, Colo., to Kansas City and is in private practice.

Jennifer Marshall DH’10, D’16, ’18
Lincoln, Neb., joined the faculty at UNMC as an assistant professor, pediatric dentistry, department of growth and development.

Andrew Benson D’12
Saint Libory, Neb., owns Loup City Dental and Saint Paul Dental and the offices work as an extension of one another; staff work at both locations.

Leslie Ellingson D’15, ’17
Papillion, Neb., practices at The Tooth Doc as an orthodontist for both children and adults. Her husband, Dan Ellingson D’12 also practices here. They have one child, a son, named Abram.

Claire Koukol D’17, ’19
Omaha, Neb., joined the faculty in the UNMC College of Dentistry in summer 2020. She serves as an assistant professor, pediatric dentistry, department of growth and development.

Melissa Schock D’17
Fullerton, Neb., and her husband Dustin Schock DH’17 both work at Fullerton Dental Care with Daniel Maas D’81. Previously, the Schocks owned the Aurora Dental Clinic and sold it to be closer to family. They sold it to Chancy Hanquist D’20 and she and her husband renamed it Aurora Family Dentistry.

Mason Niemeyer D’18
Kathleen, Ga., is stationed at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia as a general dentist for the U.S. Air Force.

Christopher Cooper D’20
Omaha, Neb., is on the team at Omni Dental Centre, with locations in eastern Iowa and Omaha.

Cody Rush D’20
Grand Island, Neb., joined Family Dental Care in Grand Island as an associate dentist in fall 2020.

Graduate Studies

Kathy Svoboda GS’79, ’82
Dallas, Texas, was promoted to assistant dean of the oral biology basic sciences graduate program at Texas A&M University in 2019.

Michael Carlson GS’96
Lincoln, Neb., retired from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Science in July 2017.

Thomas Crump GS’00
Dallas, Texas, was elected as a trustee to the American Academy of Periodontology board of trustees for district five.

Chris Shaffer GS’11
Omaha, Neb., associate dean for student affairs in the UNMC College of Pharmacy and assistant professor of pharmacy practice and science, was awarded one of the pharmacy profession’s highest honors, the Bowl of Hygeia in August 2020.

Emily Harrison GS’16
Durham, N.C., was awarded a $150,000 career development award from the Lung Cancer Initiative of North Carolina.

Elizabeth Preas GS’19
Omaha, Neb., joined the faculty at UNMC as an assistant professor in the Munroe-Meyer Institute’s Integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Births

Michelle Weber P’10
Ord, Neb., and her husband Jeffrey welcomed their fourth child, Baylor Thomas, on Sept. 16, 2020.

Branden Nemecek P’11
Pittsburgh, Penn., and his wife Alissa welcomed their son, Camden Louis, on Oct. 1, 2020.

Hilary Galvan MITS’13

Marriages

Samantha Anton N’08 & Tony Distefano
Omaha, Neb., Sept. 4, 2020

Jordan Warchol M’13, Emergency Medicine ’16 & Myles Brown
Omaha, Neb., April 4, 2020

In Remembrance

Betty Enzminger N’46
Idaho Falls, Idaho, Aug. 22, 2020

Dorothyann Haar P’49
Omaha, Neb., Aug. 5, 2020

Jean Bateman N’50, ’51
Red Bank, N.J., Aug. 2, 2020

Harris Barber M’51
Santa Fe, N.M., Aug. 15, 2020

Orin Hayes M’52
Walton, Neb., Oct. 11, 2020

Shirley O’Bannon N’52
Edmond, Okla., Oct. 18, 2020

Mary Raynor N’54
Oro Valley, Ariz., Nov. 8, 2020

D. James McCabe D’55
Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 24, 2020

Merlin Sucha M’55
Elkhorn, Neb., Aug. 26, 2020

F. William Karrer M’56
Omaha, Neb., Nov. 28, 2020

Kathleen Williams P’58
Saint Paul, Minn., Sept. 12, 2020

Mary Winter N’58
Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6, 2020

Cheryl Blakeway N’59
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 8, 2020

Janet Jodais N’59
Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 8, 2020

Richard Lamphere M’59
Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 24, 2020

D. James McCabe D’55
Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 24, 2020

Mary Winter N’58
Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6, 2020

Cheryl Blakeway N’59
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 8, 2020

Janet Jodais N’59
Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 8, 2020

Richard Lamphere M’59
Albuquerque, N.M., Sept. 24, 2020

John Herout P’60
Seward, Neb., Aug. 26, 2020

John Ludden D’61
Garland, Texas, Aug. 31, 2020

John Haggstrom M’62
Omaha, Neb., Aug. 7, 2020

Vincent Kershaw M’62
Duluth, Minn., Nov. 17, 2020

John Glen P’65
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 5, 2020
We love hearing from you!

Email your professional and personal news to: alumni@unmc.edu.

For those who submitted class notes that were not published here, they may have been published in our Special Edition of Class Notes [http://bit.ly/ClassNotes20] or will run in a future special edition.

John Donaldson M’66
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 30, 2020

Larry (Joe) Marshall M’66, ’68
Grand Island, Neb., Aug. 27, 2020

Nancy Scheet N’67, ’82
Omaha, Neb., Sept. 15, 2020

Kenneth Hatch M’71
Tucson, Ariz., Oct. 12, 2020

Leland Lamberty M’71
North Platte, Neb., Sept. 12, 2020

William West M’74, ’77
Omaha, Neb., Aug. 14, 2020

Thomas Nilsson M’75
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 24, 2020

Mary Cosper N’80, ’83
Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 17, 2020

Dalene Ingram N’81, ’83
Bellevue, Neb., Aug. 27, 2020

Ulrike Otten MLS ’81
Omaha, Neb., Nov. 1, 2020

Diana L. McKnight N’86, ’95
Phoenix, Ariz., Oct. 20, 2020

Trisha Grote MITS’93
Overton, Neb., Aug. 8, 2020

Grace Hatcher N’93
Winterset, Iowa, Nov. 23, 2020

Keith Clements PA’98
Tecumseh, Neb., Nov. 14, 2020

Michelle Bulau N’08
O’Neill, Neb., Nov. 10, 2020

Michael Duffy D’10
Creve Coeur, Mo., Oct. 11, 2020
2020 will be remembered as the year science was put on trial and then saved the day.

The unprecedented year also exposed fault lines between those who do or do not trust in science and the value of peer-reviewed, published research.

As a result, 2020 stands out as a time when product manufacturers and public officials had to publicly refute other public officials regarding proposed treatments for COVID-19 that had not been proven and/or could, in fact, cause harm.

2020 was the year China sequenced and then shared the genetic sequence of the virus with the world, enabling pharmaceutical companies to create and test vaccines in record time. That, in turn, provided new hope against COVID-19 as initial vaccines have proven effective and with few side effects. 2020 underscored the importance of collaboration and trust between countries and governments to speed research, particularly during a pandemic. It also confirmed how each investigator builds on the scientific knowledge published by others to create and update what we know at any given moment.

At UNMC, our scientists led the way with research and innovations for the benefit of not only our community, but the world. There were many team breakthroughs; here are a few (see Research Innovations on page 32 for more discoveries). UNMC experts demonstrated how to sterilize and re-use N95 masks, which were in critically short supply, and worked to understand how the virus spreads and how long it lives after it “lands.” Our colleagues in the Public Health Lab introduced many innovations to the testing process including batching samples before testing to reduce the testing material needed, which was in short supply. Our Biocontainment Unit’s clinical lab team developed an early polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and later launched a salivary PCR testing program in collaboration with Omaha Public Schools. Our anesthesia colleagues developed several devices to reduce risk to staff when performing intubation prior to the initiation of mechanical ventilation. Members of the Global Center for Health Security developed prototypes for a portable negative air pressure room to be used for patient care in low-resource communities. The infectious disease division with members of the Clinical Research Center, and many other teams, showed how clinical trials can be conducted safely during a pandemic—a critical function as clinical trials examine whether new treatments work or not, whether it’s for COVID-19, cancer or heart disease.

UNMC research did not stop because of the pandemic. Beyond COVID-19, UNMC faculty published in high profile journals in many areas including HIV, rheumatoid arthritis, vascular disease, cancer, drug abuse and tuberculosis.

Research done in 2020 will continue to benefit us years from now—just as previous research propelled us forward during this pandemic. Thanks to the global research community, we welcome 2021 knowing the science behind the authorized COVID-19 vaccines is sound. It’s a testament of the promise—and significance—of science to each of us in our day to day lives.
Make your gift to the UNMC Innovation Funds today.

Your investment in the UNMC Innovation Funds supports student engagement and wellness, helps to fund professionalism ceremonies and provides networking and professional development opportunities. It also supports the people and programs of your alumni association, which now welcomes all graduates with automatic membership. Today’s UNMC students will be as grateful for your gift as you were for the gifts that enhanced your education. And many of them will continue this tradition of giving because they’ll understand their contributions will help launch promising careers just as your generosity helped launch their own.

To donate to the UNMC Innovation Funds, visit us online at nufoundation.org/UNMCFund.