Scholarships Recognize Perseverance and Determination

It took “extra effort” for Rachel Thomas to get where she is today.

Born with Larsen Syndrome, a genetic disorder that in her case caused soft body cartilage, hearing loss, and a cleft palette, Thomas was different than her friends and classmates in her hometown of Elroy.

She underwent several surgeries before the age of five. To this day she walks on her toes to stabilize the joints in her knees. She doesn’t run well at all. Stairs are difficult. She needs a wheelchair for long distances. She wears hearing aids.

Determined to not let her disability diminish her life, she focused her energy on academics, at which she excelled. For her determination and hard work, Thomas received an Extra Effort Scholarship to Viterbo University.

The Extra Effort Scholarship recognizes high school seniors who have persevered to overcome obstacles or who have performed outstanding service to their high school and community. The program is a partnership with Viterbo, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Western Technical College, the La Crosse Tribune, and the law firm of Johns, Flaherty & Collins, S.C. One recipient is awarded a one-year, full-tuition scholarship to each school per year. Nominees for the scholarship share their stories in the La Crosse Tribune. 

Most people think of scholarships as typically awarded to academically gifted students in need of financial assistance. For this program though, Viterbo officials decided it was equally important to recognize students who possess compelling stories—many of whom have overcome enormous obstacles to make it to the doorsteps of higher education.

What followed were stories that featured many inspiring and heroic accounts of students who conquered disease, broken homes, learning disabilities, and other obstacles that would normally be seen by many as insurmountable.
On May 10, Thomas graduated with a degree in social work. She plans to attend graduate school this fall to earn a master’s degree in her field.

“My goal is to be a special needs adoption social worker,” Thomas said. “Growing up with my own disability, I know how challenging it can be to be different. I would like to find homes for special needs children where they can have a supportive environment and can grow to their full potential.”

Thomas described her childhood as a mixed blessing. “It shaped who I am today,” she said. “I’m very empathetic, and I’m very passionate about helping people with disabilities.”

Receiving the Extra Effort Scholarship meant a great deal to her, she said. “Of course there were money concerns. And I had to go to a small campus,” she said, in reference to her limited mobility.

Thomas offers some advice to people who may find themselves with a disability or obstacle to overcome.

“Definitely don’t give up,” she said. “Look to the people you trust. You’re not alone. Go to your support system, because if they love you, they’ll help you overcome your challenges. Have faith and believe in yourself.”

For Roland “Buzz” Nelson, Viterbo’s vice president for admission, seeing Extra Effort Awards Scholarship recipients succeed is particularly rewarding.

“It recognizes a cohort of disadvantaged students who have historically been unrecognized, and it also ties nicely into the Viterbo strategic plan to provide affordable access and the theme of Hope and Help,” Nelson said.

The program began with the 1997-98 school year, as the idea of then La Crosse Tribune editor and Viterbo alumnus David Stoeffler ’81, although he is quick to point out that it was a collaboration of many people.

He and others at the paper had decided they wanted to do something to address the perception that some people held that the La Crosse Tribune was more interested in stories that reflected negatively on youth, rather than on their positive contributions. In response, the paper devoted an affirming front-page story each day for a month to high school students who were making a positive impact on their community or school.

“The reaction we received was very positive,” Stoeffler said. “We wanted to do more of that.”

After learning of another school that gave scholarships to students who had overcome some sort of obstacle, Stoeffler decided the program would be an excellent fit in La Crosse. The idea of the Extra Effort Scholarship was born.

After discussing the idea with then La Crosse School District Superintendent Dick Swantz, he met with the heads of Viterbo, UW-La Crosse, and Western Technical College, who all quickly agreed to offer a one-year full-tuition scholarship each year to a deserving student. He then explained the program to a group of local high school principals, who were charged with
recommending students. The stories currently run weekly in the A+ Achievers section of the paper.

“We weren’t sure that these students would want to share their stories, so we crossed our fingers,” Stoeffler said. “It turned out that we got some great stories about area youth who had experienced hardships, but overall the message in each story was a positive one.”

Looking back at the beginning of the program, Stoeffler said he found it to be very rewarding.

“One of the great things about working in journalism is the responsibility and the great privilege of making a difference in your community,” he said. “And ultimately we were able to do this.”

“I knew a lot of kids who grew up in difficult circumstances,” Stoeffler said. “I wasn’t one of them. I received plenty of encouragement from my parents, and there was never any doubt I could go to college. I saw this as a chance to give these students the same opportunity. I also really hoped other kids would read these stories and say, ‘that’s me’ and be inspired to put their lives together and have a chance at success.”

While Thomas is well on her way to an outstanding career, other Viterbo Extra Effort Award Scholarship winners are also doing well. A new scholarship is awarded each year, and there are currently three more Extra Effort recipients attending Viterbo.

Nursing student Sandy McCullick of Seneca also had her share of obstacles to overcome. When she was 12 years old, her mother died from breast cancer.

“Growing up, it was just my mom and me at home,” she said. “We had a really special bond.”

She moved from Patch Grove to Seneca, where she lived with her sister, and then her father. A few years later, her father’s house burned to the ground while the family was away. She moved back in with her sister.

Overcoming these challenges, she made the most of her time at Seneca High School by helping other students. She was a leader of the school leadership group, Students Helping Area Resistance Efforts (SHARE), which promotes responsible decision-making in response to drugs, alcohol, and relationships.

She said she was “just thrilled” to receive the scholarship, which was a complete surprise. Upon earning a degree in nursing, she would like to work in pediatrics or a neonatal care unit, because she “really likes kids.”
“You have to pick yourself up and keep going,” offered McCullick in the way of advice for dealing with adversity and life’s challenges. “Things will get better, and there are always people around to help you.”

Being the new kid in school is hard enough. Try being new and not knowing a word of English.

That was the obstacle facing junior Spanish major Ismelda Reyes. At 11 years old and in sixth grade, she moved with her brother from their native El Salvador, joining their parents in Norwalk.

“It was like being a baby again,” she said about the language barrier. “But my brother was going through the same thing, and we had each other.”

By the eighth grade, Reyes was “able to understand English and respond back to people.” At Brookwood High School she helped other Hispanic students with English.

Reyes’ family came to America in search of a better life, and now she is the first person in her family to go to college. She described the scholarship as a “great help” that made the decision to attend Viterbo an easy one.

Ashley Misch is a young woman who can take care of herself.

While growing up, most of the adults in her life had issues with alcohol, she said. Her mom and dad divorced when she was in junior high. She spent most of her senior year at Whitehall High School supporting herself.

When not working, she concentrated her energies on academics. She was rewarded with a spot on the honor roll and the Extra Effort Award Scholarship.

“I was shaking and crying,” she said in describing the moment when the scholarship was announced. “I’m thankful beyond words.”

Misch will begin her career at Viterbo this fall. The profession of nursing is a perfect fit for her, because she has always liked helping people, and is very interested in health care and the human body, she said.

For Nelson, he never grows tired of hearing the inspiring stories of students like Thomas, McCullick, Reyes, and Misch.
“These are students who are mature beyond their age,” Nelson said. “It takes tremendous courage to overcome this type of adversity and Viterbo is honored to recognize this ‘extra effort’ with a scholarship that rewards their strength of character.”

Retirees Recall A Very Special Viterbo

May ended and Viterbo hallways quieted down a bit as six faculty closed out the school year and locked their offices not just for summer break, but for a final time.

Retiring were Jerry Benser, music; Pat Wessels and Joan Keller-Maresh, nursing; Larry Krajewski, math; David Schulz, business; and Susan Rush, music theatre. Their tenure at Viterbo ranges from eight to 37 years.

Other long-term faculty who left, but did not “officially” retire include Mary Hassinger, dean of the School of Letters and Sciences after 25 years, Lori Lewis, in dietetics for 34 years, and Wendy Storanl, after 30 years of teaching nursing students.

Their collective retirements warrant a special footnote in the university history book. Never before have this many lay faculty officially concluded their tenure at one time. Friends and colleagues observed this milestone last spring at the annual Rose Awards.

While none admitted that they would miss grading piles of papers, late night lesson plans, or final exams, all agreed that the energy derived from interacting with students and fellow faculty more than made up for the demands of their profession.

“It’s awesome seeing students get it,” said Keller-Maresh, 70, of her nursing students. “When they see a birth; when they write about the wonderful experiences they’ve had; I love the look in their eyes. I’m going to miss that.”

Keller-Maresh: A Hard Start

The nearly three decades of teaching that Keller-Maresh experienced at Viterbo included some challenges she could have hardly predicted, she poignantly recalled. Just 40 and in her first year at Viterbo, she suffered a life-threatening stroke, resulting in impaired speech and paralysis. Fearing career loss and the inability to care for her young family, Keller-Maresh received a sympathetic call from nursing chair Sr. Grace Beznouz who said, “All the sisters would be praying for me and not to worry.” Thus with these reassurances and the much needed therapy and healing time that followed, Keller-Maresh’s career and commitment to Viterbo was solidified in a very deep and unforgettable way.
Rush: She and Viterbo “Meant to Be”

While Keller-Maresh wove together a rich tapestry of memories in logging a 28-year career in nursing, Rush’s 11 years were no less intense or invigorating. In fact, for a performer, her tenure would be considered by many of her theatre peers as an eternity. “This was very surprising. I’m an actor and jobs begin and end. This was a long gig,” said Rush, 64, who originally thought, “no way” would she be teaching in La Crosse for more than a decade.

“I’m a firm believer that this was meant to be,” she said. “I developed some very rich friendships and they are here. I love my house. I love the summers. I guess I just settled in and nested.”

Like Keller-Maresh, Rush cited contact with her students as the driving force that kept her fully engaged and occupied. “I’m an actor who teaches. Shows were hard and fun. Students were hard and fun,” said a characteristically candid Rush. “It could be a pain in the ‘kiester.’ Anyone who teaches would say that.”

Krajewski: A Witness to Change

Viterbo curiosity seekers who want to go way back into the annals of Viterbo history, need look no further than math professor Larry Krajewski, who packed up his math books after 37 years of teaching. Hired by then President Rev. J. Thomas Finucan, only Darrell Pofahl in sociology has put in more years.

Now much larger, the Viterbo he recalls from 1971 was considerably different. “When I first interviewed, I had to look Viterbo up in a directory because I hadn’t heard of it. The college, which had an enrollment of less than 500, had just gone co-ed, and the Fine Arts Center had just opened. The first contract I signed was for $10,500 but that was OK.”

He enjoyed a good laugh as he recalled that he beat out another excellent candidate for the math job. That applicant, Marc Saegrove, would eventually find his way to Viterbo after he successfully reapplied for a subsequent position. “After Marc came in second to me, he then went to teach in Guam for four years and he met his future spouse there. He was then hired at Viterbo where he’s been ever since,” said Krajewski of Saegrove, a respected colleague who for decades, shared a nearby office in Murphy Center.

While Krajewski, 63, is looking forward to free Sunday nights with no papers to grade, the sense of community he experienced at Viterbo will be hard for him to replace. “It’s the people here I’ll miss.”

Likewise, fellow faculty will miss his candor and penchant for speaking out on issues that he thought were important. “That’s something I learned from my father who worked in a factory and went out on strike several times,” he said. “Always speak your mind.”
Wessels: Where were you?

It’s not uncommon for people to recall where they were the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated or when the space shuttle Challenger exploded, but few can probably remember where they were in 1978 on the day Elvis Presley died. Retiree Pat Wessels does. That’s when she moved to the La Crosse area, accepting a job teaching nursing at Western Technical College. The following year she was hired by Viterbo.

“It’s unbelievable,” Wessels, 68, said. “I look back and it doesn’t seem real. I wasn’t going to be a teacher. I was going to be a nurse. But even in the hospital, when I worked clinical, I did a lot of teaching through meetings, sharing information, and taking an active role in health issues.”

During Wessels’ career, which spanned 30 years, she left twice to pursue other interests, at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center as a patient care coordinator, and later for another health care position in Cleveland.

But the lure of Viterbo always remained and she returned to the place she loved, to teach, and to also serve briefly as chair of the nursing department and as dean of the school.

As Wessels left Viterbo for the final time, she carried with her a “golden moment” that she will always cherish. Wessels, along with Keller-Maresh, Rush, and Krajewski were conferred faculty emeriti status and each received a specially struck medal featuring the university seal, to commemorate their newly acquired status. “The medallion is beautiful. I could go to any Olympics and get in by showing that medal,” she said with a great deal of pride.

Benser: A Class Act

Also conveying a similar sense of pride, musician Jerry Benser said he knew Viterbo would be a good fit when he was hired and it didn’t surprise him that he stayed 17 years. “The ‘hiring class’ of 1991 was a good one,” he quipped. “That year included former president Bill Medland, nursing dean Silvana Richardson, and history teacher Michael Smuksta.”

Known for his passionate performance and teaching style, Benser said the founding FSPA—many of whom were musicians—set the bar high for the lay faculty they mentored.

“I don’t know how people with children survived,” he laughed. “Sisters Beth Saner, Annarose Glum, Antoinette Delorbe, as they went along, whatever needed doing, they just did it. Viterbo was very fortunate to have the FSPA. As lay faculty, we bought into it. You could sense that this was more than just a job. It’s a vocation and I could feel the dedication, devotion, and spiritual quality that the sisters had. They weren’t trying to get us to adopt the 24/7 approach, it just happened.”

For his part, Benser was pleased to share in his students’ lives and the careers they pursued. “I’m extremely proud of all the students I’ve had. They all have a destiny and many at the
time didn’t know what it was. I felt it was important to give them a sense that music is an important human need and that they were doing important work.”

Schulz: Savoring Memories

The final retiree, 64-year-old Dave Schulz, leaves Viterbo and the business department, with only one regret. “This was the best job I’ve ever had and I only wish I had started it long, long ago.”

Instead, he discovered teaching later in life, as a second career, after working as a certified public housing manager and then as a human resources manager.

While logging the shortest tenure (eight years) of the six retirees, the time it took Schulz to find his comfortable niche at Viterbo was worth the wait. In just his first full year of teaching, he was shocked to learn that he had been selected by fellow faculty and students to receive one of Viterbo’s highest academic honors—Teacher of the Year.

“What can I say? It was a crowning moment and it just seemed to come out of the blue,” said Schulz with a look that confirmed that his Viterbo memories will be carried well into the future.

Like the five other retirees, Schulz began and ended his conversation talking about students. “They are the ones I will miss the most. Students will stop by, sometimes just to share what’s going on in their lives.”

“I don’t know where to begin,” he said wistfully. “From former students, I get wedding pictures, birth announcements, invitations, and emails.”

Memories—lots of them—were shared by all six in the days leading to the close of the school year. All were too humble to admit what others knew for certain—that their contributions added to a deeply rewarding experience for their students, their colleagues, and the special place they call Viterbo.

As much as they will remember Viterbo, so too will Viterbo staff and students remember them.

Viterbo’s Teacher of the Year: Susan Cosby Ronnenberg

Centuries-old British literature can be very intimidating for many students. Fortunately, there is an associate professor of English at Viterbo University who connects the material to modern times and the lives of students, making it much easier for them to understand and appreciate.

That teacher is Susan Cosby Ronnenberg, Viterbo’s 2008 Teacher of the Year. She was presented with the honor at the annual Rose Awards ceremony in May.

“I was honored and surprised,” Cosby Ronnenberg said of receiving the award.
“When they were reading the description of the winner, I didn’t realize it was me until they said my name. I was stunned to be included in the ranks of the winners of this award, and the students who nominated me were very excited.”

Cosby Ronnenberg, 41, was promoted to associate professor this past spring. She teaches Shakespeare, history of the English language, composition, and honors English. She also teaches in the School of Adult Learning. Her ability to make the material relevant to the lives of students is just one of the things that makes her a very popular member of the faculty.

“In addition to her ability to make any subject interesting, she really takes a personal interest in students outside of class,” said Lindsey Bush, one of the Viterbo students who nominated Cosby Ronnenberg for the award. “She was extremely helpful in answering all my questions about graduate school, and she even put me in touch with a Viterbo alum who is attending the same school and program I will be.”

Bush graduated in May with a degree in English. She plans to earn a master’s degree and a Ph.D. in English before embarking on a career teaching university literature.

“Susan is definitely a mentor for me,” Bush said.

Cosby Ronnenberg, herself a first generation college student, is part of the dedicated faculty at Viterbo who genuinely care about student success. She is also a shining example of Viterbo’s proud emphasis on academic distinction, which is recognized each year at the Rose Awards.

Growing up in the small town of Sims, Ark., Cosby Ronnenberg discovered a love of Shakespeare through her oldest sister. “She was an Anglophile,” she said. “She loved all things British, including Tolkien and Shakespeare.”

Cosby Ronnenberg earned an undergraduate degree in English from Hendrix College, a small, private, Methodist school in Arkansas. She went on to earn a master’s degree in English from Southwest Missouri State University and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Oklahoma. Her love of literature was enhanced throughout her collegiate career. “I had great teachers in college,” she said.

After earning her doctorate, she stayed on at Oklahoma, accepting a full-time administrator position as the director of a women’s center on campus and teaching an occasional class. She found the work to be rewarding, but she wanted to teach full-time. “A small school similar to Hendrix College was just the type of place where I wanted to be,” she said, “with a more personal environment for students, faculty, and staff.”

Viterbo University certainly fit the bill when she began as an assistant professor of English in 2002.

“I found the faculty and the campus community to be very warm and welcoming,” she said, also adding that she learned a great deal from fellow faculty members.

There was a transition though, she remembered with a smile.
“It took a while to read the students,” she said. “Students in the Southwest talk a lot, and students at Viterbo are more quiet. Classes can be different every year, depending on the students enrolled.”

While some students may be apprehensive about finding themselves in a Shakespeare class on the first day, she is quick to allay their fears.

“I tell them that if you’ve had a bad experience in high school, I can change that,” she said. “Shakespeare wrote for everyone.”

Cosby Ronnenberg describes her class format as “conversational” as she and the students discuss and analyze the reading. She constantly seeks new ways to engage students and to make her courses even better.

“I try to give students a confidence in their understanding of the texts and the time period, and to develop their ability to analyze the material knowledgeably,” she said.

During her career at Viterbo, Cosby Ronnenberg has had to deal with a number of personal tragedies. In the summer of 2002, her father was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease and he died later that year during finals week. Her mother passed away in fall 2004. Her oldest sister died in April 2006 from lung cancer. These events did bring her closer to her other sister. They also had an effect on her career.

“I have a great empathy for non-traditional students who may be dealing with children, work, and aging parents,” she said.

Whether it is designing a new course, discussing literature with senior English majors, or meeting new freshmen in a composition class, Cosby Ronnenberg knows her career choice was definitely the correct one.

“I just like teaching,” she said.
Alumnus Making a Difference in the Lives of Children

If you live in the La Crosse area or are a regular reader of the local newspaper, you may be familiar with Dr. Dan Hale. He was featured in a Viterbo ad entitled “Give it Back,” which detailed his trips to Kenya to provide assistance to some of the world’s most needy people. Hale was the recipient of the prestigious Dr. Scholl full-tuition scholarship. Strides decided to see how scholarship recipients like Hale continue to give back to society by making a difference in the lives of others.

Dan Hale, M.D. ’96 always knew he wanted to make a difference in the lives of people.

He certainly found a career in which he can do so. Hale, 34, is a pediatrician. He serves as the Chief of Pediatrics at the Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston, Maine, and also works as a teaching attending at the Barbara Bush Children’s Hospital in Portland, Maine.

“Working with children is very rewarding,” Hale said. “I knew I wanted to give back to the world and to people, and be a part of as many people’s lives as possible. Children don’t have a voice, and as a pediatrician, the job means standing up for them. Being an advocate for children goes hand-in-hand with the career.”

A native of Hartford, Wis., Hale was the 1992 recipient of the Dr. Scholl Scholarship (now known as the Health Science Scholarship), which is a full four-year tuition scholarship awarded to a science student after a day-long competition of tests and interviews. It is the most prestigious scholarship awarded by the university and is used as a means to recruit gifted and highly sought students.

“I learned about Viterbo from one of my friends, who was a soccer player at the university,” he said. “I paid a visit, and really liked the campus and atmosphere. It was an easy choice after that. Of course, winning the Dr. Scholl Scholarship was a nice touch.”

The academics at Viterbo prepared him well for medical school, he said. He also developed a global perspective through Viterbo’s liberal arts education. He remembers sleeping outside with the members of Tom Thibodeau’s homelessness class to bring attention to the plight of the homeless in America.

While a student, Hale was very involved on campus. He was the president of the Viterbo Student Government Association and was active in campus ministry. He was also a participant
in Franciscan Friends, a friendship program that paired Viterbo students with a member of the FSPA. “They were extremely welcoming,” he said. “I ate dinner there many Sundays.”

“One of the reasons I came to Viterbo was to be part of the community,” he said. “I also learned from the Franciscan Sisters that being a part of the community makes you a better person. I’m a big believer in the fact that education doesn’t stop at the classroom door. You can sometimes learn more outside of the classroom. You learn to respect other people as a whole, and to learn things from people and their experiences.”

When Rev. Tom O’Neill first arrived at Viterbo in 1994, Hale was one of the first students he met.

“He told me about campus ministry from his perspective and offered some suggestions about how we might engage more students,” said Fr. O’Neill, who is now Viterbo’s vice president for mission and ministry. “I relied on his counsel and assistance as we built up the programs of campus ministry. Dan’s gentle manner and openness to others enabled him to work well with his peers as well as people in older generations.”

Perhaps the adventure that had the greatest effect on Hale’s life and college career was a trip to Kenya, where he worked with people living in abject poverty. Later, as a medical student at the University of Wisconsin, he returned to the country to work with patients suffering from malaria, AIDS, and tuberculosis.

“It was an awesome opportunity and an incredible eye opening experience,” he said. “Coming back to America, I had what is called ‘reverse culture shock.’ In the United States, we are surrounded by wealth, and we have everything we need. In Kenya, I stayed in a village with no running water and no electricity.”

Hale’s Viterbo experiences and his penchant to serve stayed with him. He didn’t forget the plight of the poor even as he continued to meet with success in his chosen career. During his pediatrics school residency in Maine, he served as the coordinator of a clinic for homeless children.

“That was a real awakening,” he said.

Runaway teens and youth with chemical dependency issues were the clinic’s biggest clientele. It was certainly challenging, but it was also an excellent opportunity to make a difference.

“The smallest things you would do would positively impact their futures,” he said.

The experiences in Kenya and at the homeless clinic led to an interest in public health, which allows health care providers to “look at the big picture” and “find systems-based solutions,” he said.

Today, service continues to be a large part of Hale’s life. He is a volunteer firefighter, and a member of Rotary International. He also is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics executive committee.
He lives with his wife, Laura Weissman, whom he married in 2002. He is a practicing Catholic, and a member of Corpus Christi Parish. His mission in life continues to guide whatever he does. “I’m just trying to do what Jesus did—help others,” he said.

My Personal Journal of The U.S. Papal Visit

By Rick Artman, Viterbo University President

In my mail on Dec. 17, 2007, I found a “Dear Colleague” letter from President David O’Connell of the Catholic University of America (CUA). His letter dated Dec. 12 was quite a surprise. “His Holiness has asked to address the presidents of all the Catholic universities and colleges in the United States and one superintendent of Catholic schools or the equivalent official from every Catholic diocese in the country.” Fr. O’Connell’s letter indicated more details would follow. I immediately blocked my calendar for April 17 “Washington, D.C.-Pope visit.”

Weeks later, at the February annual meeting of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, president O’Connell outlined additional aspects of the papal invitation and visit: no guests, no ring kissing, no flash photography, heavy security, registration required, make hotel reservations early and arrive well in advance of the appointed time. Washington, D.C. hotels were well aware of their special guest from Rome and appropriately jacked up hotel prices for all the visitors coming to see Pope Benedict at various venues during his three days in the nation’s capital.

Media coverage was non-stop when I arrived in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, April 16. My cab driver adeptly avoided the road closings along the papal route. People barriers were lined along the streets for the pilgrims and Washingtonians eager to catch a glimpse of the Pope or his pope mobile. I felt privileged that I would have a more unique vantage point to see the pontiff the next day.

I scheduled dinner, breakfast, and lunch with alumni in the area and enjoyed meeting several very successful Viterbo graduates, two attorneys and one Army Colonel (another School of Nursing success story). Before walking a few blocks to the Metro station, I double-checked that the invitation was in my suit coat jacket. The skies were clear, the sun shining, and the tulips and daffodils were wide open, soaking up the sun, as were hundreds of students at CUA who had gathered on the quad at the Catholic University of America. President O’Connell invited his campus community to celebrate the event and also extended an invitation to other college students in town to line the campus streets to welcome the Pope. I smiled at the sight of groups of students wearing black and white baseball T-shirts with a large number 16 on the
back, across the shoulders of each shirt was the player’s name—Benedict. These students were every bit as excited as were we Catholic educators. And in the American way, we were accosted by vendors selling Vatican flags, T-shirts, and other commemorative trinkets.

CUA hospitality was terrific—they must have some Franciscan heritage! Students and staff escorted us around every corner and security examined our I.D. and invitations at numerous checkpoints. Presidents of Catholic universities and colleges gathered in the law school for light refreshments. I often marvel at the number of students who walk our campus with elbows cocked and cell phones pressed to their heads. It was evident that we presidents are every bit as addicted—greetings and hugs accompanied the arrival of colleagues while others were busy tapping on their palm pilots and Blackberrys, or off in corners with cell phone over one ear and an index finger plugged in the other to drown out the conversations about the expected content and tone of Pope Benedict’s address.

The media had speculated the Pope was coming to scold presidents for a diminishment of our Catholic identity, reigniting the controversies promulgated by the 1990 Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* and the subsequent debates about the *mandatum* for Catholic theologians. A more thoughtful preview of the Pope’s visit was noted in several articles in the April 11 edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in which informative sources anticipated the papal message would be affirming and encouraging. I held no anxiety for a scolding. I was confident that Viterbo University was firmly rooted in its Catholic identity, as are most of our sister and brother institutions in Catholic higher education.

The security checkpoint was less intrusive than those commandeered by the TSA, but uniformed guards and secret service agents with coiled wires behind their ears were prominent. Reminiscent of my days in the Army, there seemed to be a lot of “hurry up and wait,” but we were a patient lot. At a second registration desk we exchanged our mailed invitations for a new ticket with seat assignments. The room in the student union was perfectly sized for an intimate setting, chair placement permitted a clear view of the stage and podium for all. Red leather chairs would soon be filled with cardinals and bishops and the papal entourage. Banners and a CUA choir set a festive tone and the number of cameras and media representatives reminded me this was indeed a big event. They reinforced the privilege of being present.

President O’Connell convened us an hour in advance of the Pope’s arrival. The CUA president was genuinely joyful to have us on campus and showed no signs of the stress and huge expense for his institution (several million dollars we surmised—and classes were cancelled all week in preparation for the visit). A campus camera monitored the campus entrance and beamed the images on huge screens on each side of the dais. At precisely 5 p.m., we saw the extended motorcade make its way to the entrance of the student center. The choir began, probably a bit prematurely, because it was another 10 minutes before His Holiness entered the room to a thunderous round of applause. I was told the room held about 600 people and the presidential count was about 175. It didn’t seem as if anyone else was in the room—my eyes riveted on the man in white, his outstretched hands, his gracious smile, his holy countenance.

President O’Connell offered a warm welcome on our behalf and at 5:15 p.m. the Pontiff was handed his reading glasses and script, and he began his address. Pin drop silence! I strained to concentrate on his message, softly spoken and delivered with a strong German accent but
clearly understandable. I jotted notes for a forthcoming interview with our local media and it seemed only minutes, not 25, when Pope Benedict offered his conclusions. They felt personal. He first offered his thanks for our selfless service and our generosity to Catholic education, reminding us that it has been the route from poverty for generations of immigrants. He encouraged me and my colleagues in higher education to recognize the privilege we have to serve the Church and society. His message made clear that our Catholic identity must be tangible and visible and that this is NOT measured by the number of Catholics enrolled or by audits of the contents of our courses, but by a commitment to our Catholic character. He affirmed the importance of Catholic elementary and secondary schools, especially in the inner cities, and our responsibility to provide access for Catholics to be instructed in their faith, doctrine, and practice. And finally, he asked us to be witnesses of hope.

The concluding message certainly brought to mind the theme of our new strategic plan: The University of Opportunity: Hope and Help. The Holy Father’s message likewise affirmed the importance of proclaiming the Catholic character of our institutions. Catholic and Franciscan identity is one of the four institutional priorities in our strategic plan. Another priority in the plan is access and affordability, themes also mentioned in the address. Hence, I felt encouragement and reinforcement that Viterbo is well aligned with the message.

Benedict was whisked off stage and about 10 minutes later we were given the all clear and permission to recess to a reception hosted by president O’Connell. CUA offered gifts to each guest—the book Jesus of Nazareth by Pope Benedict XVI and a brass medallion commemorating the occasion, engraved with the theme of this pontiff’s first visit to America—Christ Our Hope.

Reception buzz confirmed the encouragement we heard from his message and the affirmation of our work, notwithstanding the challenges faced by presidents and superintendents. I look forward to reflecting upon the text of the Holy Father’s address. He is an academic and I trust he chose his words carefully and deliberately. Several colleagues and I noted the absence of reference to Ex corde and we found comfort in the pastoral tone of his message. I want to study more carefully his notion of “intellectual charity” and the transition of “I to We.” I intend to invite the campus community as well as our trustees and sponsors to engage in roundtable discussion on this important address.

I suspect there will be criticism of some passages and there will be those who wanted words spoken that were not. But he spoke to me. I felt appreciated and nourished, in heart and soul.

The complete address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to educators can be found at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080417_cath-univ-washington_en.html.
ON CAMPUS

President’s Column

An inauguration theme is intended to project a vision. To be sure, when I chose “Hope and Help” as the title of my inaugural address last year, I had the future in mind. But hope and help also characterizes very well the fabric Viterbo has worn so well for many years. The feature stories in this issue of Strides are testimony to the work of outstanding faculty, administrators, and staff throughout the years and to the benefactors who unselfishly provide scholarship support to students such as Rachel Thomas and Dan Hale. Their stories put names and faces on one of the four institutional priorities set forth in the strategic plan—access, affordability, and success. (The other priorities are academic distinction, Catholic identity, and enrollment growth.)

The cycle of hope and help will continue in the good work of Dr. Hale, and Rachel and our other Extra Effort Scholarship winners featured in this issue who reach out to help others in need. Access to higher education is readily available to high achievers with assets. For many first generation college students (who will constitute over half of Viterbo’s entering class this fall) and for students of modest means, affordability is a dream breaker. The generosity of alumni and friends offers hope and help to hundreds of students who would otherwise be unable to attend Viterbo. Your support for endowed and annual scholarships puts students on paths to success, highlighted within such feature stories and in the Class Notes section. Another dimension to hope and help resides in the people working at Viterbo and a number of these individuals are featured elsewhere in this edition of Strides. We extend our best wishes and grateful appreciation to our faculty who will not return due to retirements or other transitions. Thousands of students have been influenced by these gifted teachers; their contributions will continue in the lived experiences of many of our graduates.

My reflections on Pope Benedict’s address in April to Catholic educators have been posted on the Web site and are included within these pages. The Holy Father emphasized the importance of a communal identity and he invited us to move from “I to We.” We share with pride these stories, photos, and news items to preserve and enrich your communal identity with Viterbo. The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration wove into this campus culture a set of values that remain in focus, revealed in the joyful expression of new graduates and in the legacies of retired faculty. Enjoy.

Richard B. Artman
President
Viterbo Honors Outstanding Teacher

Susan Cosby Ronnenberg, an assistant professor of English, was named Viterbo’s 2008 Teacher of the Year at the annual Rose Awards ceremony in May.

“She has a way of presenting intimidating material in a way that all students can understand, whether it’s providing visuals, explaining the subject in easier terms, or simply allotting one-on-one time to discuss the material,” said one Viterbo student.

English department chair Rolf Samuels said Cosby Ronnenberg has the trust of her students and she uses that trust to motivate them to excel.

Cosby Ronnenberg earned her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma. She teaches Shakespeare, history of the English language, composition, and honors English. She also teaches in the School of Adult Learning. To read more about her, see the feature story on page 18.

Other Viterbo employees honored at the Rose Awards:

- **Jason Howard**, philosophy, received the Alec Chiu Award, which is presented for exceptional work at Viterbo to foster and develop scholarly opportunities for both students and faculty.

- Dining Services, led by director **Mary Simota**, was presented with the Pax et Bonum Award, which is given in recognition of demonstrating the Franciscan values of service, respect, hospitality, stewardship, and joy throughout the Viterbo community.

- **Mike Collins**, chemistry, received the Sr. Helen Elsbernd Distinguished Service Award. The honor is presented to an individual who has served the university for more than 20 years, typically in more than one capacity.

- **Nancy Danou**, nursing, was presented with the Outstanding Academic Advisor Award for her work with students.

- **Rosemary Matiak**, registrar’s office, received the Father J. Thomas Finucan Exemplar of Mission Award for her demonstrated exemplary dedication to the mission of the university.

- Employees receiving Servant Leader Awards were **Jane Eddy**, Learning Center, **Sue Danielson**, health services, and **Jim Bagniewski**, graduate education.

New Deans Take Charge

There are two new leaders in the area of academics. Glena Temple, biology, will serve this academic year as the interim dean of the School of Letters and Sciences. Tom Knothe, business, assumes the position of the interim dean of the Dahl School of Business.
**Students Discover Science through Forensics**

*Kim Fredricks, biology, helps students analyze evidence at Viterbo's Exploring Science through Forensics event.*

Whatever became of Karl McWherter?

That was the question 80 high school students set out to answer using a variety of modern scientific techniques at Viterbo’s Exploring Science through Forensics event in the Reinhart Center in January.

The event was inspired by the popular hit television series, *CSI*.

“We tried to interest students in science using forensics as the hook,” said Glena Temple, biology, who headed the event. “In addition, we hoped to encourage critical thinking, teamwork, and to teach them new scientific procedures. We also wanted to expose more students and teachers to our outstanding facilities, faculty, and scholarship opportunities.”

Had Karl moved away 20 years ago as the police thought, or had he been a victim of foul play? Participating teams of students used DNA fingerprinting, GC-Mass spectroscopy, bone analysis, and blood splatter analysis to discover the answers. The members of three first place teams won a $500 Viterbo scholarship. Second place teams were awarded gift certificates.

“I think the event went very well,” Temple said. “The evaluations were very positive.”

**Viterbo Welcomes New Academic Vice President**

The Viterbo community welcomed new academic vice president Barbara Gayle to campus in June. Gayle succeeds Jack Havertape and interim academic vice president Wayne Wojciechowski in the position.

Gayle had previously served as the vice president of academic affairs and as a professor of business at Saint Martin’s University in Lacey, Wash. She earned a graduate degree from the University of Portland and a doctorate from the University of Oregon.

Viterbo is everything for which she was searching, she said.

“I was looking for a student-centered university that served a large number of first generation students,” Gayle said, herself a first generation student. “I was impressed with the institution, the facilities, and the quality of the education offered. Plus, the Viterbo community really seemed to care about the students and their learning. I think that having a passion to provide a quality education for students is the hallmark of any great institution like Viterbo.”
Gayle was a non-traditional student, earning her undergraduate degree at age 34. She studied while watching her children at “roller rinks and baseball games,” she said. She enjoys teaching a great deal, and plans to eventually teach a class at Viterbo.

“Exposure to students and the classroom will make me a better administrator,” she said. “I also plan to be active in student life—attending plays, concerts, and other events. I don’t want to be a person who just sits in an office.”

One principle will guide her decisions, she said. “What is the best interest of students? All else will follow.”

**Medland Honored with Bishop’s Award**

Viterbo chancellor and former president Bill Medland received a nice surprise during Mass at St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral April 13.

Medland learned he was the first recipient of The Most Reverend Michael Heiss Founder’s Award. He was presented with the honor by The Most Reverend Jerome Listecki, Bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse. This is the first year the diocese presented the award.

The award honors Medland for his “outstanding dedication to the mission of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of La Crosse.” For his promotion of Catholic identity, the diocese made a contribution of $1,000 to the Bill and Donna Medland Scholarship Endowment Fund.

“It’s a humbling experience to be selected for this award considering all the potential worthy recipients,” Medland said. “It reflects in part on the Catholic and Franciscan values of Viterbo University.”

The award is named for The Most Rev. Michael Heiss, the first Bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse, who served in that post from 1868-80 until being appointed Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

**Leadership at Noon**

Rusty Cunningham (pictured at left), publisher of the La Crosse Tribune newspaper, discussed the ethical decisions involved in producing a successful and responsible newspaper as part of the Leadership at Noon Series in March.

The La Crosse Tribune was founded in 1904 and purchased by Lee Enterprises in 1907 for $15,000. The paper, which has a daily circulation of 33,000 and a circulation of 41,000 on Sundays, is the source of local news for much of western Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota.

Formerly known as the Brown Bag Series, the Leadership at Noon Series was entitled “The Vision and Values of Successful Business Leadership” and featured local business people.
discussing the crucial components of a successful business. Other participants included Bruce Simones, owner of the Recovery Room, a neighborhood tavern located near Viterbo; Julie Stansfield Nordeen and Janet Stansfield Hess of Stansfield Vending; and Allan McCormick, president and CEO of La Crosse Technology.

The series was sponsored by the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership and the Dahl School of Business.

Viterbo President Named to ACCU Board of Directors

President Rick Artman was appointed to the national Board of Directors of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU). Artman began his three-year term on the board Feb. 4.

The ACCU is based in Washington, D.C., and represents over 200 U.S. Catholic colleges and universities and serves an additional 17 international Catholic universities as affiliates.

“I am pleased to have been selected by my peers to serve on the ACCU Board of Directors,” Artman said. “The relatively small board of 18 directors will enable me to contribute to the national and international conversation on the heritage and value of Catholic higher education, as well as add to the national visibility of Viterbo. Catholic higher education has a rich intellectual tradition and our Catholic colleges and universities are in a privileged position to bridge faith and culture, church, and society. My appointment will also strengthen our commitment to Viterbo’s Catholic identity, one of the four institutional priorities in the new strategic plan.”

Artman has served as a president of a Catholic university since 1994, 12 years at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Mich., and at Viterbo since July 2006.

Founded in 1899, the purpose of the ACCU is to promote and strengthen the mission and character of Catholic higher education in the United States and to serve as its collective voice. The ACCU has formed productive partnerships with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Educational Association, and various other national Catholic agencies. The ACCU also works cooperatively with the secular and religious press to secure meaningful and accurate coverage of Catholic higher education.

Love at First Flight

Liz Strohfus shared her high-flying story of service as a Women’s Airforce Service Pilot (WASP) in World War II in March as part of the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership’s spring lecture series.

“Love at First Flight: One Woman’s Experience as a WASP in World War II” explored Strohfus’ story of flight, and of overcoming the many obstacles she and her female comrades faced in climbing into the pilot’s seat.

Strohfus (then known as Betty Wall) grew up in Faribault, Minn., during the Great Depression. There she discovered her love of flying, even putting her bicycle up as collateral on a loan to
buy a membership in the local flying club. In 1942, Strohfus applied for the WASP program, an experimental, pioneering program in which women were taught to fly military aircraft. Of some 25,000 applicants, only 1,800 were accepted, and of those, Strohfus was one of only about 1,000 to earn their wings. In addition to flying military trainers such as the PT-19, BT-13, and AT-6 at the legendary Avenger Field in Texas, she went on to fly the B-26 Marauder and the B-17 Flying Fortress bombers and the P-39 Airacobra fighter. For more information on Strohfus, visit www.viterbo.edu/ethics.

Strohus’ presentation was co-sponsored by the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership and by La Crosse Chapter 307 of the Experimental Aircraft Association. Other topics in the lecture series were military courage, end of life care, and the Holocaust.

**Viterbo Part of Focus the Nation**

Viterbo participated in the Focus the Nation National Teach-in, an educational initiative designed to raise awareness and discourse related to global warming solutions, held in January.

Activities included a national Web cast, faculty and video presentations, organic food vendors, and a fair trade and sustainability fair.

The event was sponsored by the Viterbo Environmental Sustainability Committee and was free and open to the public. For more information on Focus the Nation, visit www.focusthenation.org.

**Expert Financial Aid Advice**

High school seniors and their families received step-by-step help in applying for financial aid at an open house in February.

The event was part of College Goal Sunday, a nationwide program designed to meet the needs of low-income and first generation college families in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, an essential first step in attaining financial aid for higher education. Financial aid experts volunteered their time to help students and their parents access billions in federal and state college aid, which can make earning a college degree possible.

College Goal Sunday was held at 20 locations across Wisconsin, including Viterbo. It was sponsored by the Wisconsin Association for Student Financial Aid with a grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education.

The Viterbo event featured a general financial aid presentation, individual counseling, and application assistance.

**Ethics Institute Awards Research Grants**

In a significant new development designed to create original research in the field of ethics, the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership has awarded four grants for academicians
to study topics such as the ethical challenges confronted by today’s new technology and the moral obligation facing political leadership.

The Ethics in Leadership Fellowship Program, which is funded by an endowment, will give Viterbo faculty a new opportunity to infuse ethics into their areas of expertise.

“This is definitely a major step for the institute, and something we’ve wanted to do for years,” said Rick Kyte, director of the Reinhart Institute. “We have presented hundreds of programs that have been well received by the public, and now we will also be a resource for research, which will give added recognition to the university and our emphasis on the study of ethics.”

The goal of the program is to increase the amount and quality of research conducted at Viterbo, to enhance the teaching of ethics across the curriculum in both undergraduate and graduate level courses, and to make lasting scholarly contributions in the fields of applied ethics and leadership theory and practice, Kyte said.

Four inaugural awards have been made for the 2008-09 academic year:


**Sara Cook**, business. Projects: “Intercultural Interactions between Volunteers and Staff in Non-profit Organizations” and “Early-onset Burnout among Information Technology Professionals.”

Deb Daehn Zellmer, sociology, social work, and criminal justice. Project: “The Ethical Delivery of Social Services in Rural Areas.”

Paula Ripple Comin Endowed Lectureship Brings Speaker to Campus

Pete Larson, the director of Family Fest Ministries in Minneapolis, presented “God’s Mission, My Life—Discovering, Developing, and Deploying Your Gifts” in April. The presentation was sponsored by the Paula Ripple Comin Memorial Endowed Lectureship. “God’s Mission, My Life—Discovering, Developing, and Deploying Your Gifts” featured humor and stories about what happens when we use our gifts to join in the work that God is already doing in the world around us. Larson has spent over 20 years working with young people in a variety of settings. He has led over 600 retreats and has spoken to nearly 100,000 youth in grades 5-12. He was also the host of The Wishing Well Show, an interactive television program at the Minneapolis and St. Paul Children’s Hospitals.

Let the Campus Hawk Walk Begin

President Rick Artman cut the ribbon on the official start of the Campus Hawk Walk held in April. The mile-long walk was hosted by the student-athlete advisory committee to raise awareness of the importance of good health. In addition to the walk, participants enjoyed free healthy refreshments and door prizes.
College Promise

Wisconsin First Lady Jessica Doyle watches as a student from Aquinas Middle School signs the Wisconsin Covenant Pledge during her visit to campus in April. Doyle made several appearances in the region to promote the Wisconsin Covenant program, which guarantees students a path to a college education.

Examining the Separation of Church and State

The separation of church and state has been a crucial component of American government since the founding of the United States of America over 200 years ago. This complex and sometimes divisive issue was the subject of a presentation entitled “Separation of Church and State” held in the Fine Arts Center Main Theatre in March.

Joe Heim, a professor of political science and public administration at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse joined Msgr. Bernard McGarty, the Visiting Scholar of Ecumenical Studies at Viterbo, in giving the lecture. Heim is a familiar face in the area and a frequent political media commentator. Similarly, Msgr. McGarty has gained a reputation for his talks on religious topics that are pertinent to both historical and modern times.

The lecture explored answers to questions such as, “What did our founders really intend? How have we as a nation agreed and disagreed? What are some major historical and modern-day interpretations of this principle?”

“The separation of church and state uniquely defines our American form of democracy and is guaranteed by our constitution,” Msgr. McGarty said. “That’s why it’s so important to approach the issue historically—clarifying what our founders originally intended, while understanding the tensions and influences resulting from modern interpretations.”
Distinguished Service Honored at Pope John XXIII Awards

Pictured left to right: President Rick Artman, Marci Madary, Donna and John Hansen.

Donna and John Hansen, well-known community volunteers, benefactors, and Catholic servant leaders; and the late Earl Madary, a musician, teacher, and peace and justice advocate were named recipients of the Pope John XXIII Award for Distinguished Service at an awards banquet and ceremony in April.

The Hansens emphasize faith and values in their personal and professional lives. They promote a style of servant leadership and financial stewardship that has bettered the lives of many whom they have served over the years.

“Donna and John truly live the ‘Golden Rule,’” said Viterbo president Rick Artman. “They model gospel values by the way they live and through example and I believe it is out of their love of God and their gratitude that they give generously and selflessly. Virtually all they do is done quietly and humbly as they do not seek recognition for their good work.”

The Hansens have been married for 46 years and have five children and 12 grandchildren. They are quick to give God credit for all of their business and personal successes, and are known to reaffirm in each other the importance of trusting God’s will during times of difficulty.

The Hansens specifically focus on supporting the work of pro-life and pro-family causes, Catholic education, Catholic clergy and religious orders, and people with special needs.

The other recipient, Earl Madary, is only the second person in the 34-year history of the award to receive the honor posthumously. His wife, Marci Madary, accepted the honor for the family. Earl Madary died Dec. 16 from cancer at age 42.

Madary’s influence at Viterbo was widespread. A talented musician, former Teacher of the Year, chair of the religious studies department, and advocate on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised, Madary was a popular figure among his faculty colleagues, students, and alumni who filled the San Damiano Chapel for his funeral. Viterbo set up a Web site for individuals to share memories and offer condolences and hundreds took the occasion to share stories and remembrances.

“Earl was a beloved colleague, outstanding teacher and musician, mentor, and friend to all,” said Artman. “He embodied our Franciscan values and touched the lives of thousands of students and colleagues.”

Madary was also active in the community, co-founding Place of Grace, a Catholic Worker House located in La Crosse. A talented vocalist, pianist, and guitarist, he recorded two CDs, *Gilead and Prodigals*. 
Community Health Fair

Judging by the number of people who attended this year’s health fair, the event was certainly a big hit.

Over 500 people attended the fair, which featured health screenings, a blood drive, hands-on activities, demonstrations, and educational displays.

“The health fair was a great success that will continue to grow in the coming years,” said Sue Danielson, health services nurse, who was in charge of the event. “Considering the significant number of referrals made by practitioners at the health fair, it just goes to show the importance of this event in educating its participants and the importance of prevention.”

The event was co-sponsored by Midwest Security Insurance Companies, a UnitedHealth Group company.

Viterbo Lands $450,000 Grant

The reputation Viterbo has earned as a leader in health care education received a huge boost with news that the university has been awarded a grant of $449,730 from the Medical College of Wisconsin’s Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program.

As the lead institution for the Western Wisconsin area, Viterbo’s nursing faculty and students will build relationships with the health departments of La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon, and Trempealeau counties, as well as the St. Clare Health Mission in La Crosse.

The goal of the three-year project is to mitigate the effect of chronic disease through increased disease prevention and health promotion activities. New partnerships will be formed to improve access to preventive health services for people of all ages who are uninsured or underinsured, especially in rural areas of these four western Wisconsin counties.

According to Bobbie Wilson, grants coordinator, a national review team that read all the proposals was impressed with Viterbo’s request, ranking it third highest overall.

“Our school of nursing and the collaborations that have been established with places like Caring, Inc., at the Salvation Army, really show a demonstrated track record of leadership in getting things done,” Wilson said.

A number of initiatives targeting the area’s most vulnerable will include diabetes screenings, checkups, and other preventive measures designed to connect with those most needing medical assistance.

Viterbo’s was one of 13 proposals approved for funding out of 48 submissions. Nine of the approvals were for the Milwaukee area and Viterbo’s proposal is the only one targeted to western Wisconsin.
Those most closely involved in formulating the project included Viterbo nursing faculty Stephanie Genz, Sheryl Jacobson, and Judy Talbott, grants coordinator Bobbie Wilson, as well as La Crosse County Health Department nurses Sarah Peterson ’95 and Laura Gambino.

Community health nursing students will be involved in every aspect of the project, from community needs assessment to provision of health promotion services to evaluation of project outcomes. The project will increase the number of clinical placements from one to two in the outlying counties.

In addition, this project addresses the building of a sufficient and competent workforce by improving the breadth and depth of clinical experiences for nursing students whose future will involve service in the public health arena.

**Bright Star Season Shines**

The critically-acclaimed, Juilliard-trained pianists of The 5 Browns brought their amazing talent to the Fine Arts Center Main Theatre in April. They were just one of many fine national acts to perform on the Viterbo stage again this year, as the university affirmed its reputation as a cultural center for the arts in western Wisconsin.

The 5 Browns consists of brothers and sisters Desirae, Deondra, Gregory, Melody, and Ryan Brown. Their self-titled debut album, *The 5 Browns*, spent 10 weeks at #1 on the Billboard Traditional Classical Music chart. Their smash-hit follow-up album, *No Boundaries*, spent 20 consecutive weeks at #1. The 5 Browns have also performed on NBC’s *Weekend Today*, ABC’s *The View*, A&E’s *Breakfast with the Arts*, and other national television programs. Their energy and style is opening the doors of classical music to wider and younger audiences.

This event was sponsored by Wisconsin Public Radio. It was supported by the Performing Arts Fund, a program of Arts Midwest funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes a great nation deserves great art, with additional contributions from General Mills Foundation, Land O’ Lakes Foundation, and the Wisconsin Arts Board, with funds from the State of Wisconsin.

For more information on the upcoming season, or any university fine arts event, visit www.viterbo.edu/fac.

**New Trustees Named**

Four new members have joined the Viterbo Board of Trustees. Trustees serve four-year terms and are responsible for oversight on a variety of issues ranging from budgets to new program development. Joining the board were:

- **Gerald Baldner** is the founder of Kitchen Solvers, a retail kitchen cabinet remodeling company that has over 130 franchises in 37 states. He also started The Cabinet Factory
(now Walzcraft) and Creative Laminates, a casework and countertop manufacturing company.

- **Karen -Kappell, FSPA** is a free-lance artist who has taught in middle school, high school, and at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc. She served as Viterbo’s campus minister from 1986–91 and has also served as the formation director for new FSPA members.

- **Amy Kuemmel -Connolly** was the vice president of mergers and acquisitions at Grace Matthews, Inc., in Milwaukee from 2005–07. She was also previously employed as the director of corporate finance at Prudential Capital Group in Chicago.

- **Rev. J. Patrick -Murphy, C.M.** is the director of the School of Public Service at DePaul University in Chicago. He has also served at DePaul as an associate professor, treasurer, and secretary to the board. He is an ordained priest and a member of the Vincentian religious community.

**Well Done**

President Rick Artman congratulates Alex Dunnum of Wausau, the winner of this year’s Health Science Scholarship competition. Dunnum was named the winner of the four-year, full-tuition scholarship after a day of testing and interviews in February.

**Day to Day Ethics Radio Series on Public Radio**

The *Day to Day Ethics* radio series on WLSU 88.9 FM returned for its fifth season in April with Scott Fritz, a conservation officer, discussing a personal account of a harrowing rescue that saved the lives of several individuals caught in the devastating floods of August 2007.

A sampling of other programs included interviews with CeCe Mullenbach, who talked about losing a child; Dan Green, who shared his perspective on Indian mascots; Bud Hammes on end-of-life decisions; and Ed Kondracki, who looked at the human and personal dimension of police work. *Day to Day Ethics* is produced by the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership and Wisconsin Public Radio.

According to Rick Kyte, director of the Reinhart Institute, the purpose of the series is to focus on individuals who have confronted important issues that raise an interesting ethical perspective.

“Most of these people live right here and when they share their story, the outcome is quite powerful,” Kyte said. Archived episodes are available at [www.viterbo.edu/ethics](http://www.viterbo.edu/ethics).
Trustee Has Book Published

Lindon Saline autographs a copy of his book, *Doing What’s Right, Right in the Not-for-profit Sector* for Marcia Jagodinske at a book signing in May. The book was published by the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership, its first such effort. To order a copy of the book, contact 608-796-3848 or bookstore@viterbo.edu.

Viterbo Values

*La Crosse Tribune* readers may have noticed a new Viterbo Values ad each Sunday in the business section. The ads are just one aspect of the Viterbo Values visibility campaign being undertaken by the university, which features ads in print, television, and other media. The effort reinforces the university’s strategic plan, lays the groundwork for Viterbo’s upcoming comprehensive campaign, and recognizes some of the university’s outstanding students.

PHILANTHROPY NOTES

**President’s Society Recognition Dinner**

*Pictured left to right: Leah Mathy, Gail Cleary, Norma Anderson, and Donna and John Hansen.*

Members of the President’s Society attended an annual recognition dinner at the Radisson Hotel Ballroom in La Crosse in April. This event celebrated members of the society and featured opportunities for education, socializing, and meeting the university’s faculty and students. The event was sponsored by Stansfield Vending.

With the assistance of co-chairs Gerald and Betty Baldner, Kent and Karen Handel, Todd and Deb Ondell, and Shawn and Mary Jo Werner, Viterbo realized an increase of 61 new President’s Society members this year. This greatly surpasses the initial goal of 21 new members, and demonstrates the growing popularity of this group.

The President’s Society recognizes benefactors who contribute $1,000 or more annually to Viterbo. Members are invited to an annual dinner, receive a monthly letter from the university president, are acknowledged in the university annual report, and receive an invitation to the President’s Festival of Lights and Carols held each December. For more
information on becoming a member of the President’s Society, contact Chris Sanger at 608-796-3070.

New Scholarships for Students

- **The Ruth Nixon-Davy Endowed Scholarship in Music** will provide assistance to a student studying voice or piano.
- **The Sister La Vonne Abts Science Scholarship** was created to financially assist a female student in chemistry, research, health care, or science education.
- **The Nicholas A. Johnson Scholarship for Student Leadership** will provide funds for an outstanding female and male athlete who is also involved in service to the student body through leadership in service organizations.
- **The Pope John XXIII Annual Scholarship** was created to financially assist a student who exemplifies the values and qualities of Pope John XXIII through their service to the university and broader community and who has been recognized for their efforts as an A+ Achiever.

For additional information on scholarships at Viterbo, contact Kim Hendricks at 608-796-3078 or kmhendricks@viterbo.edu.

New Endowed Funds

- **The Elaine and Jim Schauls Family -Science Research Scholar Program** was created to provide an annual award for a student and faculty member to work collaboratively on a summer research project.
- **The Cindy Tierney Nurse Educator Endowment** was created to provide annual funding for students in the Master of Science in Nursing Program.

New Grants

- **The ASIANetwork/Freeman Fellowship** provided a $33,962 grant for dietetics professor Carol Klitzke and five students to travel to South Korea for three weeks of research this summer.
- Viterbo was awarded a grant of $449,730 by the **Medical College of Wisconsin’s Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program**. The grant will be used for a three-year project designed to mitigate the effect of chronic disease through increased disease prevention and health promotion activities. New partnerships will be formed to improve access to preventive health services for people of all ages who are uninsured or underinsured, especially in rural areas of four western Wisconsin counties.
- **The Corrine Zielke Fund** of the La Crosse Community Foundation provided a grant of $2,505 for improvements to the batting cages at the Outdoor Athletics Complex.

Scholarship Recipients Say “Thank You”

One hundred-thirty students and benefactors gathered for the annual scholarship luncheon in the Fine Arts Center Lobby in March. This year’s luncheon was the largest ever, giving many students an opportunity to meet, have lunch with, and personally thank the benefactors of their scholarships.
Scholarship benefactor Nancy Pedesky of the Franciscan Skemp Auxiliary and student Katie Kaiser, recipient of the Jiracek Family Endowed Scholarship, spoke about the importance of scholarship support at Viterbo.

**Florida Alumni and Friends Gathering**
Friends of the Viterbo, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, and Franciscan Skemp Healthcare communities gathered for an “Afternoon of Franciscan Fellowship” March 2 in Naples, Fla.

**New Planned Giving Web Site**
Planned Giving is a set of philanthropic tools that can advance both your and Viterbo’s financial objectives. The university’s new Web site outlines the gift options that will create tax savings and/or income benefits for you, while assisting Viterbo in carrying out its mission. For more information, visit www.viterbo.edu and click on Giving to Viterbo or contact Gary Klein, vice president for institutional advancement, at 608-796-3074.

**Celebrating Ruth Nixon-Davy**
Viterbo hosted an event for Ruth Nixon-Davy in celebration of her life and love of classical music in May. Don and Gloria Vallejo-Comin, close friends of hers, initiated the afternoon. The event began with a recital featuring Viterbo alumni, faculty, and students performing many of Nixon-Davy’s cherished classical pieces and concluded with a reception.

A special announcement was made at the event that an endowed scholarship has been permanently created in her name by her family and friends.
John Metelko Named Cross Country Coach

Athletics director Barry Fried announced in February that John Metelko has been chosen to lead the new V-Hawk men's and women's cross country teams. “We’re very fortunate to get someone with John’s knowledge and experience,” commented Fried. “Whenever you start a new program, it’s important to find a quality person and quality coach. John epitomizes both and will do a great job for us.”

Metelko recently earned a master’s degree from Northern Illinois University while serving as a volunteer assistant coach at the University of Evansville. Metelko completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Evansville in 2005, where he ran cross country for four seasons.

“I am very excited to be coaching the first men’s and women’s cross country teams at Viterbo University,” Metelko said. “Our first teams have the opportunity to set the standard for excellence in our program and that’s a motivating prospect for our student-athletes and me. I can’t wait for our first competition.”

Athletics Department Award Winners

The athletics department hosted its second annual Athletics Honors Banquet in April. In addition to recognizing all senior athletes, baseball player Nick Albrecht, men’s basketball player Eric Ambrose, volleyball player Missy Glenna, and women’s soccer player Kailey Husby all received top athletics department individual honors.

Albrecht, Male Athlete of the Year, saved his best season for his senior year. He was one of the top pitchers for the V-Hawks this season as he was 6-3 overall and appeared in 12 games. A Midwest Collegiate Conference (MCC) First Team All-Conference selection, Albrecht helped lead the V-Hawks to a 29-16 finish and a 14-9 record in conference.

Ambrose, Champion of Character of the Year, had another successful season, but he has also had an impact off the court. The Champion of Character initiative is a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) national program that teaches five core values: respect, integrity, servant leadership, responsibility, and sportsmanship.
Glenna, Female Athlete of the Year, may have had one of the best all-around performances of any V-Hawk volleyball player in the program’s history. A NAIA All-Region VII First Team recipient, Glenna helped lead her team (29-13) to just the second winning season since 1990 and a second place finish in MCC (6-2) play.

Husby, Scholar Athlete of the Year, had plenty of success both on the field and in the classroom. A four-year starter on the women’s soccer team, Husby carried a 3.84 GPA and graduated in May with a degree in business. She was a MCC First Team All-Conference selection as well as a NAIA All-Region VII Second Team recipient.

V-Hawks Raise Money to Help Fight Against Cancer

The V-Hawk athletics department helped raise funds for the Coaches vs. Cancer and Think Pink initiatives held at the R.W. Beggs, Sr. Gymnasium during the men’s and women’s basketball games in February. A portion of every adult ticket sold was donated to the cause and the women’s basketball team sold Think Pink T-shirts and ribbons. The money raised from the tickets sold will go to the Coaches vs. Cancer initiative while the proceeds from the T-shirt and ribbons sales will benefit the Kay Yow/WBCA Cancer Fund.

V-Hawks Flock to Viterbo

Fifty incoming athletes, from locations as close as right here in La Crosse to as far away as England, will join Viterbo’s 14 varsity sports teams this fall.

Baseball and Softball Season Reviews

The V-Hawk baseball team had another successful season as they finished 29-16 overall and contended for a conference title until the last part of the regular season. One highlight from the season—the V-Hawks defeated the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in the Wells Fargo Copeland Cup. The V-Hawks’ season came to an end when they were eliminated by Iowa Wesleyan College in the MCC tournament semifinals.

The V-Hawk softball season featured many ups and downs as the team struggled to a 10-34 overall record. The season did include winning the ever-popular Wells Fargo Diamond Cup by defeating UW-La Crosse in the annual match-up. The season ended when the V-Hawks lost in the second round of the MCC tournament to Mount Mercy College 1-0.
Greetings Alumni,

There is no doubt that at this time of year you are beginning to wonder how the summer went by so quickly. Perhaps you are thinking about your kids going back to school or trying to cram in last-minute vacations before the fall.

Although I too wish the summer would last just a little longer, I always look forward to the start of the fall semester. After a quiet summer, the students will return this month, full of stories to share from their summer vacation and probably a little anxious about what the coming year has in store for them. Faculty return to campus energized and ready to meet the year’s challenges head on. The fall is my favorite time on campus because of the wonderful energy and spirit that fills the air.

Autumn at Viterbo also offers a wonderful opportunity for you as an alumnus/a to celebrate. Alumni Weekend 2008 will take place Friday, Oct. 10–Sunday, Oct. 12. We have a fantastic line-up of events and activities throughout the weekend. This year’s theme is “Harvest of Memories,” and we hope you’ll join us to share those memories with your friends and former classmates. Look for a registration form inside the front cover of this magazine and visit www.viterbo.edu/alumni.aspx?id=36172 to view a full schedule of events.

I hope you’ll join us and celebrate one of the best times of the year at Viterbo!

All the best,

Jen Roberdeau ’04

Director of Alumni Relations

P.S. We are looking for photos to share at Alumni Weekend. If you have photos from your time at Viterbo, please email them to alumni@viterbo.edu or mail them to the alumni office at 900 Viterbo Drive, La Crosse, WI 54601. Hard copy photos will be returned.
Commencement

The Viterbo Alumni Association welcomed 360 new members at the commencement ceremony last spring. Juan Jimenez '01, '06 gave the alumni address. Additionally, over 380 diplomas were distributed on July 18 when the Master of Arts in Education program celebrated its commencement ceremony.

Register for the Online Mentoring Program

Alumni now have the opportunity to mentor current Viterbo students through the new online mentoring program, Viterbo Alumni-Student Connection (VASC). The program is designed to connect alumni mentors with students in order to give future graduates a competitive edge in their field. There are currently over 100 alumni who have registered to serve as mentors via the new program, which is co-sponsored by the Viterbo Alumni Association and career services.

Alumni mentors have volunteered to:
- Conduct mock interviews
- Provide resume critiques
- Host job shadowing experiences
- Sponsor an internship
- Share general career-related information with students

Are you interested in becoming a mentor? Visit the VASC Web page at www.viterbo.edu/alumnistudentconnection.aspx. For more information, contact Beth Dolder-Zieke, director of career services, at 608-796-3827 or bdzieke@viterbo.edu, or Jen Roberdeau, director of alumni relations, at 608-796-3072 or alumni@viterbo.edu.

Alumni Night at the Theatre

Cast members from the production of Plain and Fancy gathered for a photo with Viterbo Alumni Board member Kathy Ivey '95 at Alumni Night at the Theatre. Over 100 alumni attended the performance and reception in February.
Outstanding Alumni Awards

Brian Konkol '01, Julie (Sauer) Vietri '82, and Margaret Wood '90 have been chosen to receive Outstanding Alumni Awards during the Alumni Weekend celebration in October.

Konkol will receive the Spirit of Francis Award, which honors an alumnus/a who embodies and exemplifies Franciscan values in their personal, professional, and spiritual life.

After graduating from Viterbo, Konkol enrolled at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul to pursue a Master of Divinity degree, with the hopes of being ordained as a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). After graduating in 2005, he journeyed to Guyana, South America as long-term global mission personnel. He and his wife Kristen lived in Guyana until 2007, where he served as the pastor for the Emmanuel Lutheran Parish, a lecturer for the Lutheran Lay Academy training program, an advisor for the National Youth Commission, and a director and administrator for the National Youth Camp.

This year, Konkol changed continents, moving to South Africa to continue his service with the ELCA's Global Mission program. He now serves as the coordinator for the Young Adults in Global Mission program in South Africa, the advisor for the Young Adult League of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, and a student advisor for both the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s School of Religion and Theology and Lutheran Theological Institute.

In the words of one of his nominators, Brian “has definitely taken the Franciscan values he learned and experienced at Viterbo to a new level, positively impacting people and cultures in other parts of the world. I don’t think we have seen the last of his work. Brian is a role model for all alumni and students as he continues to exemplify the Viterbo mission.”

Vietri will receive the Outstanding Alumni Award for Professional Development, which honors an alumnus/a who has made significant and broad accomplishments in their professional career.

After graduating with degrees in mathematics and French, Julie went on to teach math and computer courses at Princeton High School in Wisconsin. She moved to Seneca High School in 1985 and finally settled in Phoenix, Ariz., at St. Mary’s High School in 1987, where she still teaches today. Julie has served as the director of an SAT/ACT preparation course since 1992 and has even co-authored a preparation workbook for the SAT.

Throughout her career, she has coordinated educational and sightseeing trips for students to France and Spain, served as the chair of the mathematics and the foreign language departments, coached volleyball, and served as the moderator for several student organizations. She has also received certification as a community college instructor, and she recently received Catechist certification from the Diocese of Phoenix.

According to one of her colleagues, “Mrs. Vietri is not only an excellent math instructor who does so much outside of the classroom for her students, but she also demonstrates a genuine concern for the whole educational experience of each of her students.”
Margaret Wood will receive the Outstanding Alumni Award for Community Service, which honors an alumnus/a who demonstrates that a liberal arts education can be the foundation for unselfish and outstanding service to the community and humanity.

Wood received her Master of Arts in Education degree from Viterbo and taught kindergarten, first grade, and second grade for La Crosse Public Schools until her retirement in 2004. She has been extremely involved in community service activities, at both the local and state level. She serves on the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors, the La Crosse County Health and Human Services Board, the Wisconsin State Board of Nursing, the Viterbo School of Nursing Advisory Board, and the Viterbo Alumni Emeritus Board, to name just a few. In the past, she has also been an active member of the Viterbo Alumni Board, the American Association of University Women, and the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International for Key Woman Educators.

Wood’s son, Chris Wood ’97, said of his mother, “She embodies the Franciscan value of service above self. When she commits to a project, she gives it her all. She always has an eye on the big picture and what is best for the greater good.”

The awards will be presented during a banquet on Saturday, Oct. 11 during Alumni Weekend. For more information or to register, please look for the registration form inside the front cover of this magazine, or visit [www.viterbo.edu/alumni.aspx?id=36172](http://www.viterbo.edu/alumni.aspx?id=36172).

**Alumni Weekend 2008**

Mark your calendars and make plans to attend Alumni Weekend 2008.

**Friday, Oct. 10-Sunday, Oct. 12**

This year’s celebration will include special reunions for the classes of '58, '63, '68, '73, '78, '83, and '88, as well as the dietetics and home economics programs. Look for the registration form inside the front cover of this magazine. For more information, including a full schedule of events, visit [www.viterbo.edu/alumni.aspx?id=36172](http://www.viterbo.edu/alumni.aspx?id=36172).

**School of Nursing Reality Shock Panel**

Alumni from the Class of 2007 spoke to graduating nursing students about their first-year career experiences at the School of Nursing Reality Shock Panel in May.
Spotlight On...Jeanne Keyser ’87
Hollywood Calling!

If you go to see the new movie Public Enemies starring Johnny Depp and Christian Bale sometime in 2009, you’ll have to keep an eye out for two vintage automobiles owned by Jeanne Keyser ’87 and her husband Steve.

The Holmen couple has two automobiles featured in the film—a blue 1933 Oldsmobile with dual side mount tires, and a black 1932 Nash, also with dual side mount tires.

Public Enemies is a crime drama directed by Michael Mann and is set during the Great Depression. The story focuses on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) attempt to stop criminals John Dillinger (played by Depp), Baby Face Nelson (played by Stephen Graham), and Pretty Boy Floyd (played by Channing Tatum). Christian Bale plays FBI agent Melvin Purvis. Much of the filming takes place in Wisconsin, including Columbus, Oshkosh, and Madison, as well as in Chicago.

Steve and Jeanne love cars and have a collection of six classic automobiles: a 1905 Model F Cadillac, a 1926 Model T, a 1939 Graham Sharknose, and a 1954 Ford Crestline Skyliner, along with the two cars featured in the film. When Universal Studios chose to film the movie in Wisconsin, the Keysers were contacted by the Nash Club of America to submit photos of their cars for possible use in the film. Only a few hours after emailing their photos, they received a call from Universal Studios asking if they could use two of their cars, and if Jeanne and Steve would consider being extras in the movie.

Jeanne had the opportunity to meet Johnny Depp on the set of the movie when one day he got out of his car next to where she was standing. When she asked if she could shake his hand, she recalled that “he came right over to me and we spoke for a few moments before he was needed on the set. He is a very personable man and besides that, he has beautiful eyes!” She also recalled watching him on the set during a very cold morning of filming, when he kept checking on an extra who was supposed to be playing a homeless person on the sidewalk. Depp kept reminding the man to move around during breaks to keep warm. “There were always several people around Johnny during breaks and he could have had any one of those people go and check on this guy, but Johnny walked over himself. That is just the kind of down to earth guy he is.”

The Keysers are anxiously awaiting the release of the movie, although a release date is currently unknown. In the meantime, they enjoy an occasional cruise in one of their “classics.” You can witness the Keysers on one such cruise in the film—just watch for the car driving opposite the getaway car after Dillinger and his gang rob the bank in Greencastle, Ind., which was filmed in Columbus.
Homecoming 2008

Alumni returned to campus in February to celebrate Viterbo’s Homecoming and to cheer the V-Hawks on to victory. The day was filled with the Wall of Fame induction ceremony, the alumni basketball games, the varsity basketball games, and the post-game party at the Recovery Room. To see more photos from Homecoming 2008, visit www.viterbo.edu/alumni.aspx?id=34262.

Alumni Children’s Scholarship Recipients

Derek Freese, son of Aaron Green ’98, and Aidan Smerud, son of Theresa (Messerschmidt) Smerud ’80, have been named the 2008-09 recipients of the Sister Celestine Cepress Alumni Children’s Scholarship. Both will receive a $1,500 scholarship to attend Viterbo in the fall.

Alumna on Million Dollar Password

Nadia Wahhab ’02 was a contestant on a June episode of the CBS prime time game show Million Dollar Password. While she didn’t win, she did herself and her alma mater proud. Wahhab lives in New York City, where she owns a photography business and performs a folk music and comedy act.
Master of Business Administration Social

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) program, now in its fifth year, held a social for alumni and current students in May. Those in attendance learned about the new MBA alumni chapter that will be launched in the fall in an effort to offer alumni benefits and services specific to MBA graduates.

CLASS NOTES

1960
Mary (Kolbo) Bashaw ’69 retired after 39 years of teaching, 26 of which were in the La Crosse School District. She has been a catalyst in the Central High School strings and orchestra program.

1970
Dorothy Stolmeier, OSF ’72 retired in June and resides at the Motherhouse in Clinton, Iowa.
Nola Jo Starling-Ratliff ’74, retired as principal from Horlick High School in Racine in June.
Jane (Paulson) ’75 and Edward Ryan ’75 are enjoying retirement, substitute teaching in La Crosse, and enjoying their three grandchildren. Jane retired after 30 years of teaching, 27 years at Holy Trinity in La Crosse and three years at Cathedral.
Karolee (Hogden) Sowle ’77 was named chief executive officer of Tenet’s Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs, Calif.
Janet (Koller) Narloch ’78 is a registered nurse at Froedtert Eye Clinic in Milwaukee.
Pam (Galstad) ’79 and John Brose were crowned at the Mardi Gras Ball at Stoney Creek Inn, in Onalaska, Jan. 18. The Broses are this year’s rex and queen with the theme, “Faith, Family, Friends, Health, and Happiness.” The Ball raises money for Coulee Catholic Schools, the Gateway Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the Riverland Council of the Girl Scouts, the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Greater La Crosse Area, and the La Crosse Family YMCA.
Nicholas Narloch ’79 received a Doctor of Education degree on May 2 from Graduate Theological Foundation of South Bend, Ind. He is the director of music and liturgy at St. Mary’s Parish in Menomonee Falls.
Michael Shimshak ’79 is the superintendent of the School District of Lodi and was named 2007 Global Educator of the Year by Friends of International Education. Michael also received
a Fulbright Teacher and Administrator Exchange grant, which will allow him to spend three weeks in Argentina this summer.

Karla Uhlenhake ’79 is an assistant high school principal with the Universal American School in Festival City, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where she previously taught art for two years.

1980

Jane Kirschling ’80, dean of the University of Kentucky College of Nursing, has been re-elected to a second two-year term on the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Board of Directors. She will continue to serve on the executive committee as secretary.


Bethannie and Mark Frank ’89 adopted a daughter, Atlantis Marie, Jan. 8. Atlantis’ birthdate is Sept. 25, 2001. Her middle name was changed to Marie, chosen in dedication to Marie Leon La Croix, FSPA, ’45.

Alison and Christopher Parr ’89 celebrated the birth of a daughter, Grace Bethany, November 2007. She joins sister Ava, 3.

1990

Denyse and Timothy Thomas ’91 celebrated the birth of a son, Donovan Edward, Dec. 6, 2007. He joins sisters, Rachael, 8, Megan 5, and Sidney, 2.

Sue (Thompson) Wise ’91 joined the staff at Keil Clinic in La Crosse. She specializes in Midwifery and Family Nursing.

Laura (Ledden) Gilbertson ’92 has been promoted to director of national accounts for Entegra. Entegra is Sodexho’s group purchasing organization for food, located in Cedarburg.

Jennifer Deutmeyer McGovern ’92 and Terry McGovern celebrated the birth of a son, Jonathan Cole, Feb. 27. He joins siblings, Isabelle, 4, and Ethan, 2.

William Griffel ’92 has accepted the position of director of Purdue musical organizations and the Purdue varsity glee club at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. He and his wife, Natalie, celebrated the birth of a daughter, Josie, August 2007. She joins brother Will, 3.

Kathryn (Kempfert) ’92 and Joe Ruppert celebrated the birth of a daughter, Bethany Kate, Oct. 15, 2007.

Kerri (Wenzel) ’93 and Scott Skoruppa celebrated the birth of a daughter, Eryn, March 14, 2007. She joins sister Lauryn, 4.

Tonya (Benson) Limberg ’94 graduated with a master’s degree in biomedical visualization from the University of Illinois at Chicago’s department of biomedical and health information sciences.

Paul Tracey ’94 celebrated the marriage of his son, Jason Paul to Katie Ann Miller, Nov. 3, 2007 at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in La Crosse.
Kathlyn (Collins) Ivey '95 recently came out of retirement to become the director of religious education at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse. Robin (Stark) '95 and Vince Jacobi were married Sept. 8, 2007. Jean (Holte) Surguy '95 has accepted the interim corporate executive officer position at Ripon Medical Center in Ripon.


Tina (Daniels) Mueller '96 and family have relocated to Marshfield. Tina is a reimbursement auditor at Marshfield Clinic.

Diane O'Shaughnessy '96 is the proud grandmother of a baby girl, Sarah Michelle Olson, Jan. 2. She joins brother Jesse, 3. The parents are Jodi and Jerry Olson.

Aaron Engebreth '96 performed at the Kennedy Center as the baritone soloist with the Washington Chorus on April 27 in Washington D.C. He sang the baritone solos in Gabriel Fauré’s Requiem and Carlyle Sharpe’s Proud Music of the Storm.


Moriah (Jerome) '97 and Matt Fischer purchased and remodeled a health club in March called Ultimate Fitness, which is located in Hudson.

Rene Jacobs '97 and Todd Guentner were married Oct. 20, 2007.

Marla Murray-Koss '97, '04 joined Bronston Chiropractic. She is certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

Rebecca (Rudolph) '97 and Steven Rosenthal celebrated the birth of a daughter, Hannah Josephine, Jan. 21. She joins sister Abigail, 2.

Sean Vigue '97 is celebrating 12 years working as a professional singer/actor/dancer as a member of Actor’s Equity, performing in opera, music theatre, and non-musical theatre. He resides in central Florida and is the sole proprietor of Mr. Fitness, LLC. He is also the Pilates instructor for all Disney property.

Ryan McMillen '98 is the coordinator of Alternative to Traditional Incarceration of Citizens (ATTIC), for Wood County Drug Court in Wisconsin Rapids.

Alison (Rockweiler) '98 and Greg Monson celebrated the birth of a daughter, Danika Kathleen, Oct. 12, 2007. She joins brother Brock.


Sarah (Gryskiewicz) '98 and TJ Rawitzer celebrated the birth of a daughter, Claudia, Jan. 15. She joins sister Lucille, 2.

Melissa (Hanson) '98 and Kurt Southworth celebrated the birth of a son, Alek Kenneth, Sept. 11, 2006. He joins sister Kirsten. Melissa is a registered nurse in surgery at Reedsburg Area Medical Center.

Lisa (King) '98 and Tim Trueblood celebrated the birth of a daughter, Sierra Rose, Nov. 20, 2007.

Sandra (Peterson) Walsh '98 was promoted to postmaster on Oct. 29, 2007 for the Tomah Post Office.

Nancy (Ehl) Etringer '99 retired from the United Community School District in Boone, Iowa. She taught for 33 years.
Kay (Cupery) '99 and Scott Hubbard celebrated the birth of a daughter, Liv Elise, Nov. 29, 2007. She joins sister Ava.

Melody (Voskuil) Kong-Ndoube '99 is serving as a staff nurse for obstetrics and gynecology in the United States Army and is stationed in Heidelberg, Germany.

Jody (Leitz) '99 and Paul Krause '98 celebrated the birth a son, Peter Michael, Jan. 22. He joins siblings, Andrew, 7, Joseph, 4, and Elizabeth, 2.

Mary (Carrie) Mueller '99 is a registered nurse at Agnesian Healthcare for St. Agnes Hospital in Fond du Lac.

Dinah (Storkel) Sparks '99 retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jan. 3. She is a substitute education assistant for the Tomah School District.

2000

Serena (Dolato) Bahe '00 finished her first marathon in 4:48:35 on Nov. 11, 2007 with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team In Training for cancer research, raising $3,806. She is an English teacher at Cibolo-Schertz-Universal City Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas.

Jocelyn (Branson) '00 and Josh Buxton celebrated the birth of a daughter, Jaymeson Reece, Jan. 3. She joins sister Ellie, 3.

Nicole (Avery) Clutter '00 is working at Western Technical College as a library assistant and operating an e-commerce online store from home.

Christi (Graber) '00 and John Gronemus celebrated the birth of a son, Carson Daniel, March 7. He joins brother Dawson, 3.

Theresa Hagen '00 graduated with a Master of Science in Nurse Midwifery degree in 2006 from Frontier School in Midwifery and Family Nursing in Hayden, Ky. She is a nurse midwife at Franciscan Skemp Healthcare at the Onalaska Clinic.

Marcy and Chris Herman '00 celebrated the birth of a son, William Christopher, Sept. 7, 2007. Chris is the assistant prosecutor with the Montgomery County Prosecutor’s Office in Dayton, Ohio.

Anne (Radzak) '00 and Chadwick Hodgson were married Aug. 5, 2007. Anne is working at the Best Buy Corporate Campus as an administrative assistant in Richfield, Minn.

Alexander “Sasha” Bobrov '01 graduated from Kansas City University of Medicine, May 17. He is now a doctor of osteopathic medicine undergoing his residency training in emergency medicine at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center in Toledo.

Angela (Osgood) '01 and Dax Connely were married Jan. 5 in Onalaska.


Katie (Peterson) '01 and Kyle DeVries '01 celebrated the birth of a son, Caleb Renner, Nov. 30, 2006. He joins sister Madeline. Katie is a registered nurse at Luther Hospital in Eau Claire in the neuro-pediatrics trauma department and Kyle is a state patrol trooper in the Eau Claire area and is also a technical crash reconstructionist.

Kim Hendricks '01 has accepted the position of annual fund associate with the institutional advancement office at Viterbo University.

Brian Konkol '01, after three years of service in Guyana, South America, is the coordinator for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Young Adults in Global Mission Program in
South Africa. Konkol facilitates volunteer experiences for young adults from the U.S. seeking a global service experience.

Nancy (Trautwein) ’01 and Brandon Krueger celebrated the birth of a daughter, Raegan, March 6, 2007.

Sara (Christianson) Lieurance ’01 is employed as a school nurse with the School District of La Crosse.

Dustin Mueller ’01 is a systems analyst at Grande Cheese Company in Fond du Lac.

Jessica (Potaracke) Myhre ’01 is a registered nurse at Gundersen Lutheran in La Crosse.

Philomena Ofori-Nipaaah ’01 graduated in May from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. She is in the process of being ordained as a Presbyterian minister and doing her chaplain residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Md.

Marcia Atherton ’02 retired from the United Community School District in Boone, Iowa. Prior to instructing the sixth grade, Atherton also taught second and fifth grade. She taught for 33 years.

Leah Amundson ’02 and Christopher Faber were married June 24, 2006 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Cashton.

Cynthia (Maas) ’02 and Christopher Fisher ’02 were married March 8 at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Random Lake, Iowa.

Josh Gates ’02 has accepted the position of annual fund gifts officer with the institutional advancement office at Viterbo University.

Capt. Tim Hornick ’02 joined the Army Wounded Warrior Education Initiative in August 2007. He will be studying social work at the University of Kansas.

Maria (Langer) ’02 and Eliud Korir were married Feb. 23.

Carol (Uerling) ’02 and Eric Miller celebrated the birth of a son, Isaac Daniel, Feb. 1. He joins brothers, Zach, 8, and Alex, 2.

Kristen (Jackowski) ’02 and Ryan Pieper were married Oct. 27, 2007 in Milwaukee. Kristen is a registered nurse at Kaiser Permanente in Colorado.

Kerrie (Shingledecker) ’02 and Matt Rausch celebrated the birth of a son, Cason Jacob, Dec. 7, 2007. He joins brother Quinn, 2.

Eric Slette ’02 is an admissions representative at the Minnesota School of Business in Richfield, Minn.

Katharine (Kreofsky) ’02 and Ryan Smith celebrated the birth of a son, Henry Steele, March 26, 2007.

Elizabeth ‘Liz’ (Yang) ’03 and Kevin Brungraber were married Aug. 27, 2007. Liz is working as a graphic designer with AVS Group in La Crosse.

Stacey (Boberg) ’03 and John Giemza were married April 14, 2007. She is teaching kindergarten for the Arcadia School District.

Trisha Lepke ’03 and Joe Gronemus were married Feb. 22 in Mexico. Trisha is employed at Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua.

Michele (Thompson) ’03 and Bret Halvorson celebrated the birth of a daughter, Katelyn, April 14.

Julie O’Rourke ’03 and Robbie Hancock celebrated the birth of a daughter, Elizabeth Julia, April 6. Julie is teaching art in the Mauston School District.
Emily Huber ’03 and Joel Hill celebrated the birth of a daughter, Lily Ann, July 5, 2007. Emily is a reading and language arts teacher in Dallas. 

Molly (Nesbitt) ’03 and Christopher Maka were married May 26, 2007 at the Basilica of St. Josaphat in Milwaukee. She is the adult services librarian at the Matheson Memorial Library in Elkhorn. 


Luke Peterson ’03 earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is employed as an associate veterinarian specializing in dairy production medicine and surgery at Wisconsin Valley Veterinary Service in Wausau. 

Amanda (Rhatigan) ’04 and Thomas Anderson were married June 23, 2007. Amanda is employed by the Onalaska School District. 

Julie Hagen ’04 is working as a long-term care specialist for CUNA Mutual Group, serving both Wisconsin and Minnesota. Her office is located in Albert Lea, Minn. 

Mandy (Howe) ’04 and Jason Hess ’03 celebrated the birth of a daughter, Josselyn, March 1, 2007. She joins sister Megan, 4. Mandy is a mental health and chemical dependency counselor at the Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center in Winona. Jason is a social worker with Monroe County Human Services in Sparta. 

Trina (Degendorfer) ’04 and Paul Jogunoori celebrated the birth of a daughter, Arianne Isabelle, Feb. 2, 2007. 

Rebecca “Becky” (Raatz) ’04 and Steven Kramer were married Sept. 8, 2007 at the San Damiano Chapel in La Crosse. 

Heidi (Steuter) ’04 and Jeremy Laabs were married May 24. 

Katie Siri ’04 is acting in The Musical of Musicals: The Metropolis Performing Arts Center in Arlington Heights, Ill. 

Erin Verhagen ’04 is teaching second grade at Thomasville City Schools in Greensboro, N.C. She is pursuing a master’s degree at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. 

Margo (Anderson) ’04 and Jason Weindorfer celebrated the birth of a daughter, Nora, April 2. She joins brother Jonas, 2. 

Lisa (Georgesen) Wobbema ’04 passed the Registered Health Information Administrator exam in July 2005 and is working for Olmsted Medical Center as a health information manager/HIPAA privacy officer in Rochester, Minn. 

Michelle Mosner and James Davis ’05 were married July 7, 2007. James is a high performance computing software engineer for Cray, Inc., in Mendota Heights, Minn. 

Erika (Wiste) ’05 and Brian Fiers were married Sept. 8, 2007. Erika is employed by Franciscan Skemp Healthcare in La Crosse.
Tracy (Haberman) ’05 and Anthony Gullickson were married Feb. 2 in the Carribean. Their daughter Katelyn was born, July 2, 2005. She joins step-brother Michael, 10.

Mike Iverson ’05 and Andrea (Sogla) ’07 were married June 9, 2007. Mike is a paralegal assistant for Snell and Wilmer. Andrea is a registered nurse in labor and delivery at Banner Good Samaritan Hospital. They reside in Buckeye, Ariz.

Mary Komorowski ’05 is a registered nurse at the Green Bay Correctional Institution in Green Bay.

Amy (Swanson) ’05 and Michael Marvin were married March 15 in Eau Claire. Amy is a registered nurse at Luther Hospital in Eau Claire.

Jackie King Miller ’05 completed her Master of Music degree in 2007 and is singing soprano at Michigan Opera Theatre. She is also a private voice and piano instructor.

Whitney Esmond and Jeremy Miller ’05 were married May 31. Jeremy is employed by Kwik Trip, Inc., in the Twin Cities.

Kimberly Simmons ’05 is teaching first grade at Rockville, Md., and has received the Teacher of the Year award.

Rachel (Bornitz) White ’05 illustrated The Perfect Gift, a children’s picture book published by Homegrown Publications, a Wisconsin publishing company. She is pursuing an art teacher certification at Southern Connecticut State University while broadening her teaching experience at The Little Red School of Art and Music in Stratford, Conn.

Stacey Bohachek ’06 is teaching high school science in the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District in Middleton.

Joseph Brunner ’06 is an earth science teacher in the Madison Metropolitan School District in Madison.

Brock Kuklinski ’06 is teaching music for kindergarten through eighth grade at St. Paul’s Catholic School in Mosinee.

Kari (Schwitz) ’06 and Casey Klug celebrated the birth of a son, Karsen William, Feb. 4. He joins sister Camryn.

Charissa (Pichler) ’06 and Michael Kroening ’03 were married June 23, 2007 at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse. Charissa and Michael own and operate M.C. Kroening, Inc., in Madison.

Cassie Gray ’06 is a registered nurse in an oncology/hematology/bone marrow transplant/palliative care unit at the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison.

Erica Lloyd ’06 is program director for the community theatre in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She will be assisting with directing and stage managing Lysistrata for the Classics at Brucemore series and directing a children’s show this summer called Dear Edwina Junior.

Betsy Nefzger ’06 earned a master’s degree in administration and a special education endorsement from Viterbo University in La Crosse. She is an elementary principal for the Valley Board of Education in Elgin, Iowa.

Erica (Fix) ’06 and Marc Odegaard were married July 2006 on French Island in La Crosse. Erica is working as a registered nurse at Trinity Health Physicians in Moline, Ill., and also works part-time at Trinity Hospital in the surgical intensive care unit in Rock Island, Ill.

Shannon (Bartsch) ’06 and Allen Schawe were married June 29. Shannon is a registered nurse for the oncology department at Gundersen Lutheran Hospital in La Crosse.
Jamie (Bettesworth) ’06 and Joseph Schloegel were married Dec. 8, 2007. Jamie is employed by the Family and Children’s Center in La Crosse.

Amanda (Johnson) Spangler ’06 is the director of the Lunda Community Center in Black River Falls.

Stacy Waldera ’06 is a registered nurse in the pediatrics department at Franciscan Skemp Healthcare.

Brian Voltz ’06 is a police officer with the Monona Police Department.

Rebecca (Reese) ’07 married Dominick Albano June 9, 2007.

Kathy (Skrede) Benson ’07 graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in July 2007. She is a registered nurse at Richland Hospital in Richland Center.

Doris Bernette ’07 is a nurse recruiter at Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Tomah.

Stacey Bohachek ’07 completed her Master of Arts in Education degree in July 2007 and is teaching science in the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District. She resides in Cross Plains.

Pamela (Nofsinger) ’07 and Alejandro Campos were married March 29.

Elizabeth “Lizzy” (Volten) ’07 married Mark Erdmann April 19 in Jaco, Costa Rica.

Lacey Forsyth ’07 completed her Master of Arts in Education degree in July 2007 and is teaching in Winterset, Iowa.

Morgan Haggerty ’07 is the director of Tomah High School’s show choir, Limited Edition.

Brittany Johnson ’07 is pursuing a law degree at the University of Toledo in Toledo, Ohio.

Kelly (Flattum) Johnson ’07 is a registered nurse and manages the emergency department at the Osceola Medical Center.

Nicole Keuper ’07 is a plasma center technician at BioLife Plasma Services.

Jim Lattimore ’07 is a revenue auditor for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue in Eau Claire.

Megan (Elmer) ’07 and Mitchell Linde were married July 7, 2007. Megan is an ante/post partum nurse in Phoenix, Ariz., and is pursuing a master’s degree to become a family nurse practitioner.

Janice Manahan ’07 is a data integration coordinator at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Victoria (Thomas) ’07 and Daniel Mooney celebrated the birth of a daughter, Alexandra, April 12, 2007. She joins sister Carolina, 3. Victoria is pursuing a doctorate degree at Yale University in New Haven, Conn.

Bethany Poellinger ’07 is a senior office assistant at Gundersen Lutheran and will be working on her master’s degree this fall at Viterbo University.

Cassandra Slagle ’07 was named “Volunteer of the Year” through the University of Iowa Foundation. This award is for the tremendous number of hours and diversity of her commitment to Eastern Iowa non-profit organizations. She has accumulated over 225 hours of community service since October 2007. Cassie is currently an AmeriCorps member of the Red Cross and is pursuing a career in health care.

Amanda (Blank) ’07 and Justin Steele were married March 14 in Onalaska.

Matthew Sullivan ’07 is a financial analyst at Benchmark Electronics for the Minnesota Division.

Danielle (Dunham) ’07 and Jesse Tsukno were married June 1, 2007 in La Crosse. Danielle is teaching elementary art at West Salem Elementary.

Amie Vos ’07 is a youth ministry assistant at Holy Family Catholic Church in Woodruff.
Anne Wilson '07 is a substitute teacher for two school districts, Richland School District in Richland Center and River Valley School District in Spring Green.

In Memoriam

The Viterbo University community joins in prayerful remembrance of those who have died. Eternal rest grant unto them, Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Paul Heires, May 21, brother of Mary Walter Heires, FSPA '43 and Rita Heires, FSPA ’56.
Thomas Rohlik, March 11, brother of Mary Rohlik, FSPA ’45.
Mary Adami, Dec. 29, 2007, sister of Rose Frances Phalin, FSPA ’47.
Patricia Freed, FSPA ’47, Feb. 22.
Dorothy Karsmo, May 21, sister of Bernadette Hahn, FSPA ’47.
Bernard Heller, March 8, brother of Mary Elizabeth Heller, FSPA ’51.
Delores Bruch, FSPA ’52, Jan. 22.
Catherine “Kay” (Unser, Szklarski) May, Jan. 14, sister of Carlene Unser, FSPA ’53.
Faith Ruetten, FSPA ’53, April 11.
Dennis Schlosser, Feb. 27, brother of Blanche Schlosser, FSPA ’55.
Floyd Beres, April 3, brother of Leclare Beres, FSPA ’56.
Charlene Dernbach, FSPA ’56, Feb. 5.
Gertrude (Mary Stanisla) Rohner, FSPA ’58, June 5.
Agnes Bergs, May 3, sister of Clarone Brill, FSPA ’59.
Paul Grossbeier, Jan. 13, brother of Marian Grossbeier, FSPA ’66.
Elizabeth Lang, Feb. 25, mother of Marla Lang, FSPA ’64 and Eileen Lang ’67.
Dick Hebert, March 14, brother of Elizabeth “Betty” Hebert, FSPA ’68.
Laveta Jacobs, FSPA ’68, Feb. 22.
Erma Leist, March 11, sister of Mary Ellen Huebsch, FSPA ’70.
Devoine “Duke” Jerome Quillin, April 12, father of Colleen (Quillin) Weibel ’70.
Joseph Scigliano, Feb. 20, husband of Audry (Kies) Scigliano ’70.
Marvin Wiskus, Jan. 25, step-brother of Carrie Kirsch, FSPA ’70.
Mary Kimmet, Dec. 29, 2007, mother of Loretta Kimmet-Mobley ’71, Dorothy (Kimmet) Giallombardo ’73, and sister of Loretta Penchi, FSPA ’54.
Mary Hammell, Jan. 12, mother of Margaret (Hammell) Nordwig ’73, Anna (Hammell) Meiners ’74, Phyllis (Hammell) Yarber ’77, and Theresa (Hammell) Ostert ’81, sister-in-law of Georgia Hammell, FSPA ’53, aunt of Theresa (Walleser) Key ’72, Lisa Manning ’87, and Elizabeth (Troendle) Shaw ’66.
Anne Poehling, May 9, mother of Nancy (Poehling) Haggerty ’74.
Norma L. Chudd, Jan. 22, mother of Debora Chudd ’75.
Leon Palmer Young, May 30, father of Wendy (Young, Wegner) Storandt ’76.
Boyd Braem ’76, May 1, 2007.
Malachy Morrissey, March 31, brother of Shirley Morrissey, FSPA ’79.
Rita Smerud, May 12, mother-in-law of Theresa (Messerschmidt) Smerud ’80.
Patricia “Patty” (Piehl) Rehberg ’85, Feb. 16.
Jeffrey Dean Ellingson, Feb. 5, brother of Jay Ellingson ’87, brother-in-law of Kari (Mlsna) Ellingson ’87.
Carol Ann Schieber, Dec. 28, 2007, mother of Debra (Schieber) -Jergenson ’87 and Jane (Schieber) Boe ’95.
Homer Harris, June 4, father of Rebecca Harris ’93.
Mary Louis (Noelke) Larkin ’96, Feb. 4.
Earl Ghelf, May 4, grandfather of Nicole (Ghelf) Hanson ’06.

A FINAL WORD

Retirees Reminisce about “Their” Viterbo

By Pat Kerrigan

It was their time to talk and mine to listen.

Pending retirement can promote a lot of reminiscing, so I scheduled a visit with our departing faculty to hear more about what it was like at Viterbo and what memories they will be carrying with them as they locked up their offices one final time.

Joan Keller-Maresh, nursing, talked about what it was like to be just 40 and to suffer a debilitating stroke in the very first year of her teaching career. Frightened and uncertain about her future, a loving and caring campus community embraced her and gradually her fears dissipated.

Dave Schulz, business, couldn’t get over the shock he experienced when fellow faculty paid him the ultimate compliment after just his first year at Viterbo, naming him Teacher of the Year. If you can believe it, Schulz made a confession that would shock the payroll officer at Viterbo. “This is the most fun I’ve ever been paid to do. In fact, I never told my wife, but I would have done it for nothing,” said Schulz who enjoyed two other careers and didn’t get started at Viterbo until he was in his 50s.
Susan Rush, music theatre, said an actor is always on the move looking for his or her next job. At Viterbo, she broke the rule and stayed because she liked La Crosse, her students, and her colleagues. “I just nested,” she admitted.

Pat Wessels, nursing, doesn’t recall how many students she taught, although she knows the total is plenty. At 68, she leaves still believing she has a lot more to give and thankful for her rich and rewarding career at Viterbo.

Jerry Benser’s passion for music and teaching is impossible to miss. He brought with him, for our chat, letters of thanks from several students often containing heartfelt reflections that he could hardly talk about without choking up.

Finally, Larry Krajewski, a man always known to speak his mind, logged 37 years at Viterbo, quite a feat by anyone’s standard. At Viterbo, he taught every course in the math curriculum except probability and statistics. Years of routine? Hardly. He said he’ll miss teaching and in particular, his colleagues. “We had a wonderful department. I can’t think of a time when we’ve had a serious fight. We always worked things out,” he said.

All had stories to tell that began and ended in a similar fashion. Dedicated professionals, they love teaching, interaction with their students, and the daily dose of stimulating conversation that goes on among friends and fellow faculty within the campus community where good chemistry and camaraderie prevail.

I couldn’t help but feel that Viterbo founders would be pleased with what I was hearing from this first large group of lay faculty to retire at the same time. The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) started this educational mission well over a century ago.

Some names are familiar. Sisters Celestine Cepress, English; Grace Clare Beznouz, nursing; Marie Leon LaCroix, theatre; symbolize hundreds of other like-minded FSPA members who dedicated their life work to advancing the mission of Viterbo and the careers of its students.

I love the way Jerry Benser described the FSPA he worked with early in his career and the way a cadre of dedicated nuns influenced his approach to the music profession. The sisters he knew led by example. Today, the term “mentoring” is a fancier modern day equivalent.

“Whatever needed doing, they (FSPA) just did it. You could feel the dedication, devotion and spiritual quality the nuns had. They weren’t trying to get us to adopt a ‘24/7’ approach. It just happened.”

I have to agree. When I started at Viterbo 24 years ago, 33 FSPA were working at the university. I knew many and worked incredibly hard to meet their standards in the hopes that I would not disappoint.

While the number of FSPA has dwindled over the years, the expectation always remained that the stewardship, mission, and Franciscan way would be carried on by future generations of lay faculty and administrators.

Some might say that the FSPA vision is a tall order to maintain in today’s highly mobile, grab ’n’ go, here-today and gone-tomorrow society.

But, Viterbo is still a place that works, adhering to Franciscan values while growing and changing and meeting the challenges that go with it.
Some things change, but in good places like Viterbo, the underlying values that bind a community together, remain the same.

That’s what keeps Viterbo going and why the university continues to attract dedicated, quality faculty and staff.

And to those who have just retired, thanks for your commitment, for putting students first, and most of all, for being an important chapter in the continuing Viterbo story. Your retirement is well deserved. Your colleagues that remain and the future generations of faculty and staff who will follow in your footsteps, will do like the FSPA did for us, benefit from your good work.