

## Community Kudos

### Benjamin, Locke lauded for their local impact



Associate Dean Richardean Benjamin, right, is all smiles during a surprise visit from YWCA President and CEO Mary Kate Andris.

By Irvin B. Harrell

**R**ichardean Benjamin, associate dean of the College of Health Sciences at Old Dominion University, was named a 2020 YWCA Woman of Distinction. She will be officially honored at a special awards luncheon on Tuesday, March 31.

Benjamin was selected under the category of “Education, Training & Development.” In the words of the YWCA, “she inspires a passion for lifelong learning in those around her. She contributes through practice, research or administration in a learning environment including the education system, employee training and development, community education and/or alternative programs. She motivates others to gain knowledge, set

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Elizabeth Locke, with the School of Rehabilitation Sciences, at The Westin Virginia Beach Town Center before receiving her

By Irvin B. Harrell

**E**lizabeth Locke, director of clinical education for Doctor of Physical Therapy program at Old Dominion University, was named one of the 2019 Women in Business Achievement by Inside Business. The award is designed to celebrate women who have been successful in their business and careers, have made a significant impact on the business community and local economy and have served as mentors and examples to others.

Nominees must have a Hampton Roads presence – the aim of this award is to recognize local business-women for their local impact.

Locke was born in Lafayette, La., and grew up in

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goals or seek opportunities.”

Benjamin, who has a wealth of experience, evidenced by her decades of educational achievements, said she had to think long to find words to express what the honor means to her.

“As a woman of color who has been working in this field for more than 50 years, it’s difficult to summarize my response into a single quote,” she said. “I can’t overlook the values instilled in me by my parents and teachers from high school years where two things were emphasized; education and doing your best.

“I have come to realize that there were too few role models and numerous obstacles to encounter. Yet the things that motivated me to persist included accomplishments of the students I’ve worked with as well as the patients and families whose lives I’ve touched. This recognition is most meaningful because it originated from my colleagues.”

With expertise in psychiatric mental health nursing and psychiatric epidemiology, Benjamin’s area of research has focused on Cultural Competency of Nurses Health Promotion of Minorities.

She has practiced nursing in a variety of settings, and she has served as an administrative associate for the American Nurses Association’s Minority Fellowship Programs, in addition to her many roles at Old Dominion University, which include graduate program director for the School of Nursing, chair of the School of Nursing, and recently interim dean for the College of Health Sciences.

When Benjamin began her career in the South in the 1960s as a black nurse, she had to wear a different colored uniform from white nurses because of segregation. Even housing among black and white nurses were separate. Through it all she persevered, dedicating her life to the service of others – regardless of differences racial or otherwise – whether they lived in rural areas with outhouses and no running water or in cities filled with the homeless and drug addled.

In rural Georgia, she worked in a surgical inten-



Associate Dean Richardean Benjamin poses with Irvin Harrell, the Coordinator of Strategy & Marketing for the College of Health Sciences and Mary Kate Andris, President and CEO for the YWCA. Harrell nominated Benjamin for one of YWCA’s Women of Distinction.

sive care unit and operating room where open-heart surgeries were performed. In Manhattan, she worked for the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program run by Beth Israel Medical Center, which at the time was a research program. There, she worked in Harlem, treating patients with heroin addictions. Whether low-income, rural white people or low-income, urban black people, Benjamin provided the same high level of dedicated service to helping others.

Benjamin has been dedicated to community involvement in Hampton Roads since the early ’90s. She served for several years on the Norfolk Community Services Board Prevention Services and the Portsmouth Healthy Families Advisory Committee, and spent three years as chair for the Minority Health Research Consortium of Hampton Roads.

She served for three years on the steering committee for the Consortium for Infant and Child Health (CINCH), which works to improve children’s health in Hampton Roads. She was also a member of the Ongoing Treatment and Support Workgroup of the Governor’s Taskforce on Improving Mental Health Services and Crisis Response.



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rural Jennings, La. Living in the rural South, she was exposed to the socioeconomic impact of limited to no healthcare resources, including the lack of healthcare providers who served the needs of poor black people. That experience inspired her to pursue a career in the health-care field.

“The extent of unmet medical needs in poor Southern communities – especially for children – inspired me to pursue physical therapy with a focus on pediatrics to create the change needed to address health concerns at the earliest ages,” she said. “I believed then as I do now that deliberate recruitment and retention of qualified persons of color into this profession will positively impact healthcare outcomes in communities of color.”

Locke earned a Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy from Virginia Commonwealth University, Master of Science in Community Health Education (1991) and Ph.D. in Health Services Research (2008) from ODU.

The prospect of becoming an academic clinical director, which marries clinical, business and education sides of her profession, brought Locke to ODU and she has been here for 26 years and counting. In 1994, Locke became the first African American physical therapist appointed to a full-time core physical therapy faculty position at ODU.



Elizabeth Locke, center, accepts her award at a special ceremony at The Westin Virginia Beach Town Center on Dec. 10.

Locke attributes her success in life to the lessons instilled in her by her parents, whom she regards as her heroes.

“They taught me to treat all persons with respect, Christian values, pride of heritage, love of family, maximize educational opportunities, determination in the face of adversity, the value of a sound work ethic, and to always make time to care for those in need,” she said.

Locke’s advice to women in business is to develop a strategic mindset and remain informed. Women must be focused, forward-thinkers who form alliances that facilitate business development and growth, she says.

As for the honor, Locke says being recognized as one of the top

women in business in Hampton Roads is humbling.

“Achievement is never the boast of one person. I stand on the shoulders of many women and men, past and present, who have paved the way for me to be recognized for the work that they began and for which I have the honor of continuing,” she said. “I hope that my award will inspire other women in business to continue to break barriers, strive for the best in themselves, and further our shared commitment to advance the business of our professions.”

Locke was featured in “Inside Business” in its Dec. 9 edition. She also was officially recognized at a special ceremony on Dec. 10 at The Westin Virginia Beach Town Center.

### Mishoe honored at AARC international conference

Professor Shelley Mishoe was invited to give one of three honorary plenary lectures at the American Association for Respiratory Care Congress' International Respiratory Convention & Exhibition in New Orleans, Nov. 9-12.

Mishoe delivered the 35<sup>th</sup> Phil Kittredge Memorial Lecture, titled "Closing the Gap: Improving Critical Thinking Skills for the RT." In addition to her lecture, she participated in giving a Women in Leadership Pre-Course on "Planning and Managing Career Transitions."

The convention, attended by more than 6,000 participants, also was the stage of another honor for Mishoe.

She received the 2019 National Honorary Member Recognition of the Lambda Beta Society "in recognition for lifelong contribution in support of the academic excellence in the profession of Respiratory Care."



Professor Shelley Mishoe, center, is honored with giving a lecture at the AARC conference.

## COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES: Operation Escape Room



Staff members spent time touring the School of Nursing's new digs in Virginia Beach and then found their way out of a nearby escape room. From left, Natasha Bibbins, Freda Johnson, Tammie Smith, Nadine White, Starmayne Wilson, Irvin Harrell, Charlotte Alexander and Carla Knox.



# Student/mom sets academic example

By Irvin B. Harrell

Since moving to the area in August 2018, Kasey Byrd appears to have mastered the art of school/life juggling. The 32-year-old mother of two will see her hard work pay off this semester when she graduates on Dec. 14 with a 4.0 grade point average in medical laboratory science (MLS) at Old Dominion University.

“It was harder for the entire family not having me around all the time,” she said. “So I felt like I owed it to myself and them to do the best I could in school.”

Kasey, her husband Nathaniel, and her twin 10-year-old boys Alexander and Oliver landed north Suffolk by virtue of the Navy. Nathaniel has been in service for 18 years and his latest assignment took him to the Newport News Shipyard. The family recently moved to Smithfield.

Once the Byrds first arrived in Hampton Roads, Kasey started scouting for education opportunities in medical laboratory science.

“I love the science of health care, but I didn’t really know what kind of job I would get with biology,” she says. “So, I started Googling and found that a lot of folks with biology degrees went back to get their MLS.”

Kasey says without a solid support system, going back to school would have been very difficult.

“It was really stressful,” she



says. “But my kids and husband were very understanding. The kids – being older now – knew that I had to study. My husband has a bit more flexibility with his job, so that helped, too.”

As for school, Kasey raves about her experience at the College of Health Sciences. The MLS program was rigorous but also came with a support system, she said.

“The program is small,” she says. “There’s about 20 people and we’re all in the same classes together. You form a strong bond with your classmates, and it’s nice to have that.”

Barbara Kraj, the director of the MLS program, says it’s students with Kasey’s work ethic that make teaching worth it.

“They keep you on your toes as they ask questions that make you think again and maybe revisit what

you thought you knew,” she says. “It is a joy to have someone like Kasey in the classroom – I believe other students looked up to her. Her respectful attitude and craving to do well were contagious. The whole class benefited from this.”

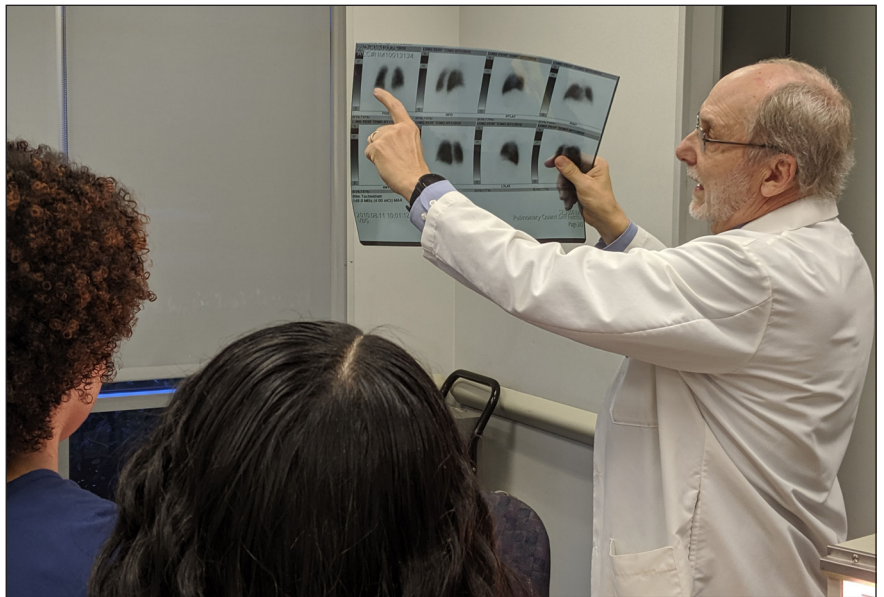
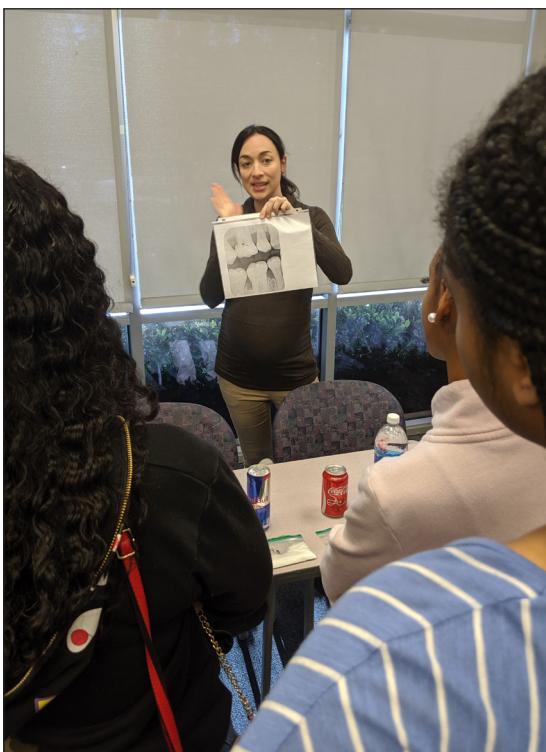
Kasey’s parents didn’t attend college but her grandmother, an elementary school teacher, went to school at State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. The MLS degree will give Kasey a shot at a “grown-up” job, she says. Kasey has been doing a residency at the Hampton VA Medical Center, where she is planning to work as a medical technologist specializing in microbiology and blood bank.

“It’s important work,” she says. “It’s important for doctors to have the full clinical picture. [Medical

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# Recruiting in the Peninsula

Faculty and students from the College of Health Sciences partnered with ODU Peninsula, Admissions, Advising, Financial Aid, Transfer Programs and Thomas Nelson Community College on Nov. 6 to hold an open house for high school students in Hampton featuring the college's programs.



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laboratory scientists] are not always as visible, but we're just as important as a doctor or nurse to patient outcomes."

This semester Kasey's hard work paid off with an added acco-

lude from the American Association of Clinical Chemistry. She was named Clinical Chemistry Student of the Year.

Past the honor, the perfect grades, and career on the horizon, time at home was sometimes less than perfect, Kasey confesses. Her advice to mothers contemplating

school and a family: "You can't expect to be perfect with everything. There have been nights when my kids ate corn-dogs for dinner," she says. "Just be ready to commit. Don't go at it half-heartedly or you're just going to end up frustrated."



# ODU lecturer emphasizes importance of vaccines

By Irvin B. Harrell

Janice Hawkins, a nurse and senior lecturer at the School of Nursing, has been on a mission for the past three years and that mission is gaining momentum here at Old Dominion University and statewide.

Hawkins is a proponent of Shot@Life, which “educates, connects, and empowers individuals to champion global vaccines as one of the most effective ways to save the lives of children in developing countries.” Worldwide, one in five children does not have access to life-saving vaccines because of the lack of resources, inadequate health systems, in-country conflict and social/geographical exclusion.

With the resurgence of different diseases globally, immunizations continue to be critical to the health of children. Measles, considered rare and deadly, is a highly contagious disease with symptoms such as high fever, cough, runny nose, water eyes, and rashes. From January to September 2019, more than 1,200 cases of the measles were confirmed in the United States across 30 states. Meanwhile worldwide, 170 countries reported more than 120,000 cases – a 300 percent increase of incidences of the disease from 2018.

Polio is a crippling and potentially deadly disease, which has become rare over the years due to vaccinations. In September, WHO



Shot@Life Champions visit Capitol. From left, Abdul Malike, a George Washington University DNP student; **Cat Paler, an ODU nursing adjunct faculty member**; Carmina Bautista, Virlita DeLima, and Hi-Lo Verdadero, with the Philippine Nurses Association; **Janice Hawkins, ODU faculty and Shot@Life State Co-Leader for Virginia**; Teresa Vu, a George Washington University DNP student; **Mylene Calderon, an ODU nursing adjunct faculty member**; and Angel De Guzman, president of the Philippines Nurses Association.

declared a polio outbreak in the Philippines.

Shot@Life, a United Nations Foundation organization, rallies members of the public, public officials, businesses, and others – through education, grass roots advocacy, and fundraising – to support and invest in the global childhood immunization programs offered by UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), and Gavi, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations.

Hawkins and other School of

Nursing faculty have welcomed the organization’s advocacy training, which is producing a growing number of “Shot@Life champions” among their students. Thus far, nearly 200 students and faculty at ODU have been trained as advocates.

“What we’re doing here in the School of Nursing is helping healthcare workers find their voices as political advocates,” she says. “It’s about empowering nurses to be a lot more vocal about the need

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for vaccines so that our elected officials are able to make informed decisions.”

In October, Hawkins and several Virginia Shot@Life champions went to Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional officials to stress the need for continued financial support of the international effort to ensure vaccine availability. While there, she spent a whole day of training, which included mock sessions with congressional members to practice what to say, as well as getting updates on outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases around the world.

Hawkins first got involved in Shot@Life about three years ago, when one of her colleagues – Deborah Gray, a Fulbright Scholar and clinical associate professor for

ODU’s School of Nursing – invited her to join the organization. From that point on Hawkins was hooked and her crusade has evolved from simply spreading the word to others to incorporating such advocacy in the school’s curriculum.

“For three years now, we’ve been making it part of the curriculum for undergraduate nursing students so it’s offered during their class time,” Hawkins said. “Graduate students also are invited to participate in training sessions and congressional member visits.”

Because of her commitment and advocacy, Hawkins has been featured on Shot@Life’s website as a “Champion Spotlight.”

“I’ve been an advocate for vaccines for many years,” she told the organization. “For me, the most meaningful aspect of attending the Champion Summits is the working

skills that I have gained as a political activist. Prior to joining the campaign, I had minimal experience interacting with members of Congress. I was unfamiliar with the process and found it intimidating. The Shot@Life training, resources, and mentored experiences have greatly increased my political advocacy knowledge and skill set.”

Hawkins has taken those skills and used them to recruit and educate others. The thing to keep in mind is the overall mission of healthcare professionals, she says.

“As nurses, in our code of ethics, we are required to be patient advocates, and I think that’s probably true of all health professionals,” she said. “I think our students get that in a hospital scenario, but getting them to understand from a community-based scenario is sometimes more difficult.”



# Rite of passage

The School of Nursing held its White Coat Ceremony on Nov. 11, at Operation Smile in Virginia Beach. At right, nursing students recite their oaths after being coated.





*Happy Holidays!*  
*From the College of Health Sciences*

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

And the door prize goes to...



From left, Michelle Kekeh, My Ngoc Nguyen, and Daniel Mardock were winners of a door-decorating competition for the School of Community & Environmental Health.

