

Physician inspired by dynamic educator

Boosts scholarship fund to \$100K

By Mark T. Harris

Lisa Nagle, CMA, program director of the medical assisting program at Augusta Technical College in Augusta, Ga., puts a special premium on fostering a supportive environment for medical assisting students. “Whatever their life circumstances at the moment, we want to give them the confidence to move forward,” she says. “We try to let them know we’re here to help them be successful.”

It’s this dedication to the success of her students that defines Nagle’s reputation as an educator. It’s also why Paul Fischer, MD, director of the Center for Primary Care (CPC) in Augusta, recently chose to honor her in a special way. The college’s new medical assisting scholarship sponsored by Fischer will be named after Nagle upon her retirement.

“The scholarship is a tribute to Lisa Nagle’s work and recognition of the critical role medical assistants play in primary health care,” says Dr. Fischer, who also serves as the college’s program advisory chair for medical assisting. Medical assistants trained under Nagle enter the workforce not only with medical assisting skills, he says, but with the attitude and work ethic that define the professional spirit. “Lisa embodies the idea that ‘a good teacher doesn’t teach what they know, but rather what they are.’”



Paul Fischer, MD, and Lisa Nagle, CMA, present scholarship check and certificate to student Karen Dempsey.

The endowed scholarship provides two annual awards in the fall and spring. Fischer plans to increase the initial \$10,000 endowment to \$100,000 over the next few years.

Nagle, who has a Bachelor of Science degree in education from the University of Georgia, is a 1977 graduate of Augusta Tech’s medical assisting program. She worked as a medical assistant for four years at an OB-GYN practice before becoming an educator and director of the Augusta program in 1981. Today, the program employs four educators with a yearly enrollment averaging 100 to 120 students. In addition to the Augusta campus, the program has two satellite campuses within a 60-mile radius.

Under Nagle’s direction, the program has developed especially strong ties with area medical practices. “Our externships try to utilize practices that

primarily hire our graduates,” she says. “We have more of a return back to us then, as far as wanting to hire from us again.” In Nagle’s view, it’s this sense of shared commitment between the school and the local medical community that makes the program the success it is. For Dr. Fischer, the feeling is mutual. His outpatient practice has used Augusta Tech externs at its multioffice facilities since 1993. “A large percentage of the staff we hire are [medical assistants] that Lisa and her instructors have trained,” he reports.

Given the fact that not many people can say they’ve had a scholarship named after them, Nagle is both honored and humble about the recognition. She’s also not quite ready to retire. That day will happen in about four years. For now, her focus remains on the students she has taught the last 26 years. “I hope the new scholarship will be another incentive for our students,” she says. She’s also pleased the criteria for the award are not strictly based on grades, but emphasize qualities Nagle has long encouraged in her students—initiative and strong work values.

In the end, Nagle’s motivation as a teacher and mentor remains straightforward and inspiring. “Education can be a powerful tool upon which to build your future,” she concludes. “It gives you something that no one else can take away.” ◀