



"Up Close" is a regular feature in *Imprint*. This column profiles outstanding nursing students. Readers are invited to submit names for consideration to andreamae@new.rr.com.

BY ANDREA GLYZEWSKI

Casey Thompson



Casey Thompson never aspired to be a nurse. But she re-evaluated her life after graduation and decided to pursue nursing. "A lot of us tried other things and knew it just wasn't it."

A senior student at the Bellin College of Nursing in Green Bay, Wisconsin in a two-year accelerated program, she cannot imagine pursuing any other career. Thompson, 24, along with others in her class, will soon obtain a second bachelor's degree.

Starting with pre-med aspirations, Thompson quickly switched her college major to psychology after taking an introductory course which piqued her interest. She graduated from St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wisconsin in 2001, and worked at an insurance company for about three months before rethinking her future. She recalled how much working with children in autism therapy impacted her life while in college. "I wanted to be back in that helping role and missed it a lot," she says. Thompson adds that nurses have more variety in their careers and many times have greater flexibility.

Nursing is not Thompson's only new-

found passion — she also is heavily involved in school organizations and activities. She is an NSNA member and Wisconsin Student Nurses' Association (WSNA) member and serves in her local chapter as fundraising director, and student senate treasurer. In her BSNA role, she organizes many fundraisers, including clothing and stethoscope sales. She also volunteered in a local asthma walk; volunteered to distribute winter coats for area children; helped conduct blood pressure screenings sponsored by a pharmaceutical company; and supported breast cancer awareness in the community. Thompson is dedicated to extracurricular activities in part because she did not have the time to participate in any during her first degree. "But," she adds, "I like to see accomplishment and success, and sometimes you need to be involved in order to do that."

During her junior year she participated in a diversity outreach program for healthcare and social science students in Wisconsin. Thompson listened to nurses and others speak about Hmong and Latino cultures. "It really explained how most of the stereotypes out there are not true," she says. "I also learned how important it is

to talk with the client and not the interpreter when in a language-barrier situation." She believes the workshop better prepared her to adapt to different healthcare settings and situations.

Thompson also had a rewarding experience as an intern in a Wisconsin summer community health program at Shawano County Health Department. The internship was rural-based, and she played a key role in creating an area physical activity pamphlet for residents. She says the pamphlet highlighted local baseball fields, swimming areas, tennis courts, parks, and other places where the community enjoy exercising for free and learn more about physical activity. The internship also offered opportunities to work with nurses, administering immunizations and handling other community health issues. "It was a great way to realize that I really do want to help people, and seeing the nursing role in the community was an eye-opening experience," she says.

It is hard to imagine that Thompson has much time for studying after such a plethora of activities. But she has made the dean's list, and is ready to tackle senior year with her new knowledge.

“As a nursing student I’ve learned how crucial every little step of nursing is: being the patient’s advocate, documentation, and knowing about medications. It’s amazing to think I’m the one caring for this patient,” she says. “Also,” she adds with a smile, “office life just isn’t for me. I really look forward to wearing scrubs every day.”

In addition, Thompson enjoys observing and talking with nurses in the clinical setting, and wants to carry this knowledge with her when she graduates. She says each nurse has his or her own special way of caring for patients, and looks forward to learning from all health care professionals during her nursing career.

That’s is not all Thompson learned – thanks to nursing school, she eats healthier now. “I’d say my junk food intake has decreased 75 percent,” she says. “When I was in college the first time, I’d eat cookies for breakfast. I would crush them up and put milk on them. But now, if – as a patient’s nurse – someone told me that that’s what they ate for breakfast, I’d hope it was at least with skim milk.” Thompson also incorporates daily exercise into her routine to keep fit and decrease stress.

Being a healthy role model is important to Thompson, as it is not just patients she wants to teach. She encourages recent high school graduates or anyone else interested in nursing to consider this as a career. Seek out opportunities to learn about nursing, such as “Day with a Nurse” or nursing camps, Thompson suggests. “I think it’s one of the few careers where you can get a bachelor’s degree and then get such a wonderful job,” she says. “But, if you’re unsure about nursing as a career, I think you should wait. It takes a special person to do this kind of job.” She also plans to help mentor nursing students when she graduates and is a registered nurse herself. Thompson says it is important for students to learn on-the-job with some guidance, and she can definitely relate.

Thompson plans wants to work in a medical-surgical an acute care hospital after graduation, but her long-term plans include community health and returning to school to become a nurse practitioner. She has been happily married for two years, and when not studying, she enjoys shopping, reading, and working out. Thompson looks forward to graduation and becoming a full-time registered nurse. And even after all of her health education, she will probably never turn down a cookie. ☺

Andrea Glyzewski is the 2005-2006 Up Close reporter, and a senior nursing student pursuing her second bachelor’s degree at the Bellin College of Nursing, Green Bay, Wisconsin.