

# Dunham Fund gives 53 nursing scholarships

## Agencies, foundations, schools support program

By Linda Girardi

FOR THE BEACON-NEWS

AURORA — High school friends Nancy Vargas and Nora Guerrero were reunited at Aurora University's Dunham Hall over the weekend.

"It's encouraging to see a classmate follow the same path," Vargas said of herself and Guerrero, who are among the 53 nursing students named to the inaugural class of the Dunham Nursing Scholarships — Advancing Nursing in Aurora program.

The scholarship program will expand nursing opportunities for promising students and give students an opportunity to practice in diverse settings, as well as help meet areas of need in the greater Aurora area.

Vargas, 21, plans to get her RN degree from Waubensee Community College, while Guerrero will attend AU's nursing program.

"The scholarship takes a great weight off my shoulders,

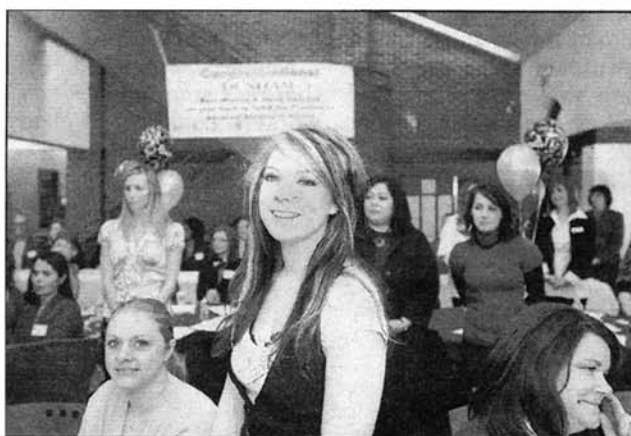
knowing I can concentrate on my studies and not have financial worries," the 2006 East Aurora High grad said.

In September, the Rush-Copley Foundation announced plans for a \$750,000 Dunham Nursing Scholarship program honoring the legacy of the late John C. Dunham.

The scholarship program has been funded by the Dunham Fund, a private foundation founded by the Aurora entrepreneur and philanthropist in 1996. John Dunham was a strong supporter of Aurora-area educational institutions, where he inspired students to achieve excellence in scholarship, character development, work ethic and commitment to community.

The ceremonies were held in the atrium of AU's Dunham Hall, an academic building that was a gift to the university from John's sister, Martha.

"They had a lifelong love for learning and (believed) ... learning should be avail-



**Recipients of the inaugural class of Dunham Nursing Scholarships — Advancing Nursing stand as their names are called during a ceremony at Aurora University.**  
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able to everyone," Aurora University President Rebecca Sherrick said.

"John believed that anything is possible, and he would see in all of you the future of this community," Sherrick told the nursing students.

The Rush-Copley Foundation has partnered with AU and WCC, as well as Alden of Waterford, Dreyer Medical Clinic, Provena Mercy Medical Center, Rush-Copley Medical Center, VNA of Fox Valley and the Kane County Health Department in establishing the scholarship program.

The students, ranging in age from their early 20s to mid-50s, are beginning nursing studies, pursuing RN degrees or master's degrees.

Twin sisters Alyssa Veliz and Ashley Liakas obtained their associate nursing

degrees after graduating from Hinckley-Big Rock High School in 2004. They presently work in the emergency room and doctor's surgical room at Provena Mercy Medical Center in Aurora.

Both knew they wanted to get their bachelor's degree. Liakas said one day she spontaneously applied at AU and encouraged her sister to do the same after hearing about the scholarship program.

"You think about going back to school, but you get so crazy about life and put things on the back burner. This was an opportunity we could not say no to," said Liakas, 23.

Elizabeth Indelicato, 54, of Sugar Grove, works in registration at Delnor Hospital in Geneva and had been taking prerequisite classes for the past several

years when her husband became disabled. She is pursuing an RN degree at WCC.

"This means the world to me," a tearful Indelicato said.

And 30-year-old Adam Johnson will begin graduate studies this week in AU's new masters in science of nursing program. The Plano resident works in the ER at Provena Mercy Medical Center.

"I was thinking about going back to school next year — this is exciting," Johnson said.

"John would be shaking every hand and getting their story," said Ryan Maley, chairman of the Dunham Fund. "He would be very proud that it happened under his name and that there were people working hard to improve themselves and help the community."

"(John Dunham) would be very proud that it happened under his name and that there were people working hard to improve themselves."

Ryan Maley, chairman of the Dunham Fund



**Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner (front left) and members of the Dunham Fund Board of Advisers were present when nursing scholarships were awarded to 53 area students and professionals. Aurora University, Waubensee Community College, agencies and hospitals support the program.**