



Jodie Beverage pieced together funds to become an RN, but new scholarships should make nursing education affordable. **CHUCK BERMAN/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

Scholarships support nursing

Aurora-based Dunham Fund will boost local health care by funding medical education

By Jack McCarthy
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

An Aurora-based foundation is looking for more nurses like Jodie Beverage.

A single mother who left a manufacturing job to become a nurse, Beverage went on to earn several degrees and is now the operating room clinical educator at Rush-Copley Medical Center.

She pieced together scholarships, employer tuition aid and other funding to achieve her dream. Now the Aurora-based Dunham Fund plans to make it easier for other nursing students to complete their educations.

Last week, the fund and a consortium of nine local groups announced a two-year, \$750,000 scholarship program to help nurses enhance their education and use their skills in the Aurora area.

"I'm just one example of how desire and a passion for the nursing profession, combined with opportunity, can benefit the community at large," said the 42-year-old Beverage—who now holds a master's degree in nursing education—during the Dunham Fund announcement Friday at Rush-Copley Medical Center.

"This fund gives promise for other nurses just like me, who struggled with the financial resources to realize those dreams."

Starting in January, the Dunham Nursing Scholarship—Advanced Nursing in Aurora program will fund 121 scholarships for nursing students attending Waubensee Community College and Aurora University.

While in school, nursing students will perform in health care-related community service projects. After graduation, they'll be required to work as a professional nurse in the Aurora area for at least two years.

"This is designed to expand nursing in our community at several different levels," said Barbara Graham, executive director, Rush-Copley Foundation. "[It will] attract Aurora's best and brightest on the nursing side. This gift by the Dunham fund advisers is not only an

investment in nursing education but in the community as a whole."

Scholarships will fund 90 percent of tuition at Waubensee and 75 percent at Aurora University. Students must be enrolled or accepted at either school. Applicants must also be Aurora-area residents for at least one year before application or employed locally. Applications will be available beginning Oct. 1. A review committee consisting of representatives from each group will select scholarship recipients.

Participating health-care organizations include Alden of Waterford, Dreyer Medical Clinic, the Kane County Health Department, Provena Mercy Medical Center, Rush-Copley Foundation, Rush-Copley Medical Center and Visiting Nurses of the Fox Valley.

The Dunham Fund was established in 1996 by the late Aurora businessman and philanthropist John C. Dunham. The fund supports individuals and non-profit and charitable groups in the greater Aurora area.

It also granted \$210,000 in college scholarships last year to graduates of eight Aurora area high schools plus Mooseheart and Batavia high schools.