

Eileen Gordon, right, administers a vaccination in the offices of The Gordon and Mangan Travelers' Clinic in Beachwood, OH. Business partner Gail Mangan, center, reviews health concerns for their patient's upcoming trip.

Enterprising Nurses:

FPB ALUMNI TURN NURSING BACKGROUND INTO ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Christine Carson Filipovich, MSN '77, BSN '73, RN, is the founder, owner, and chief executive officer of Professional Nursing Resources, Inc. (PNRI), a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania-based management firm that provides services to nursing and health care organizations. PNRI's objective is to help its clients—primarily small and mid-size nursing associations—grow in strength, effectiveness and self-sustainability. Ms. Filipovich's work day is spent much like that of any other business leader, and she also regularly travels to conferences to represent clients and advocate for nurses. Sound like a natural extension of a career as a clinical nurse specialist with a specialty in perinatal care? Not exactly. But for Ms. Filipovich—and an ever-growing number of nurse entrepreneurs—the connections make perfect sense.

Increasingly, FPB alumni are launching entrepreneurial ventures, and when they do, they find that not only does an FPB education prepare great nurses, but—together with the variety of professional opportunities it leads to—an education at FPB can also be a first step toward success in the world of business.

“As a clinical nurse specialist, I was educated to look simultaneously at a patient population and at an individual in that population, to analyze the need for systemic changes and to put in place the policies and practices that would make the system better,” explained Ms. Filipovich, the 2008 recipient of FPB’s Award for Excellence. “The clinical nurse specialist has the educational preparation to figure out what needs to be done to address problems.” Exactly the kind of independent, thinking-outside-the-box problem solving that entrepreneurship entails.

Early in her career, working as a clinical nurse specialist with three physicians in an OB practice, Ms. Filipovich was hired to provide patient care, but she also expanded her role to include developing community education programs and evaluating community resources. An entrepreneurial thinker from the outset, Ms. Filipovich said she “worked to fill in the gaps in some of the services available in the community.”

After a stint at the Pennsylvania Department of Health and at suburban Harrisburg Hospital, by 1993 she worked as Nursing Practice Program Administrator for the Pennsylvania State Nurses’ Association. The experiences she gained in providing a full range of services were not just helpful to her in starting her own business; they were the reason her business came into being. When the state association decided to eliminate several of its programs, several smaller nursing organizations asked her to continue to provide them with her services as an independent consultant.

“All my previous professional experiences layered together gave me the breadth and depth of experience to enable me to say, ‘Yes, I want to do this,’” recalled Ms. Filipovich, who started out in 1998 as a one-woman operation with few

resources beyond her knowledge, her connections, and a home computer. Today PNRI includes eight employees, and the company also provides services through collaborative relationships with a number of consultants.

NERVES OF STEEL: WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME A NURSE ENTREPRENEUR

Christine Filipovich’s leap into entrepreneurship was born of **necessity** and **experience**. For Katherine Youngberg Kolcaba, PhD ’97, MSN ’87, RN, becoming an entrepreneur grew out of her vision of a new way to **satisfy a need**. In fact, Kolcaba developed an entirely new theory, Comfort Theory. Before this theory was developed, comfort was viewed negatively, as the absence of pain. The comfort that Dr. Kolcaba refers to is a positive concept. In this theory, comfort is defined as the immediate experience of being strengthened through having certain needs met and accounts for many aspects beyond physical comfort. “FPB is unique in graduating nurses who think outside the box,” said Dr. Kolcaba, whose business, The Comfort Line, Inc., provides hospitals a way to improve

nurse satisfaction and patient care. “FPB students graduate with a powerful sense of possibility.”

Dr. Kolcaba, who worked as a nurse at University Hospitals and taught at The University of Akron College of Nursing for 22 years before retiring in 2007, now consults with hospitals to teach them how to apply her theory.

Comfort Theory, which now appears in nursing textbooks, was developed when Dr. Kolcaba was working on her PhD at FPB.

While Dr. Kolcaba has enjoyed her company’s success, she does not identify herself as a businesswoman or as a consultant. “I am a nurse. I don’t want to twist people’s arms to buy something they don’t really need, but I think this is needed in health care,” explained Dr. Kolcaba, who was honored at Alumni Celebration 2008 with the Alumni Association Board President’s Award. “It became my mission to make things better in health care, so any health care business is in my bailiwick. The Comfort Line is kind of like my baby, and I want to see it thrive. It’s taken on a life of its own, more than I ever imagined.”



Christine Carson Filipovich, founder, owner and CEO of Professional Nursing Resources, Inc.

Been There, Done That: TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN LAUNCHING YOUR OWN VENTURE

“There are so many ways to improve health care. I would encourage our graduates to believe in their own best ideas and work to get them realized, to see them in practice.”—K.K.

“Find a niche you are passionate about. Find a product or service you just ache to want to share with other people. That passion will keep you going.”—M.F.

“You have to be open-minded. Ask as many questions as you can. You have to be open to recommendations and resources. Sometimes you think something’s a great idea, but you need to step back and be open to the possibility that it’s not. Be open to adjusting.”—T.C.

“Know your limits and contract services where you need to get help.”—E.G.

“There are great resources available in the community. Through many chambers of commerce, entrepreneurs can find advice and mentoring by retired businessmen and women, such as through an organization called SCORE (www.score.org).”—J.J.

“Make sure you have enough resources and money to get through the first two years—those are the make or break years for startups.”—E.G.

“Realize that because of the demand for our services as nurses and nurse practitioners, we are in a relatively unique position to be able to work in our field part time while growing a business part time, which allows you to grow your business without going into tremendous debt.”—M.F.

“Go for it. Take your ideas seriously—if you thought of it, then other people might have thought of it too—there might be a real need for your idea.”—T.C.

“You have to have **patience** to set up your own business,” said Eileen Gordon, MSN ’94, co-owner of The Gordon and Mangan Travelers Clinic, a franchise of Passport Health, which is a network of vaccine and traveling medicine clinics. “What with using the internet, setting up a wireless office, handling the legal aspects of owning a business, and learning how to manage invoices and payroll, you have **to be willing to teach yourself a lot.**”

The Gordon and Mangan Travelers Clinic offers comprehensive preventive medical services for travelers, including vaccines. In addition, the company provides some on-site medical services for corporations. Ms. Gordon and fellow FPB alumna Gail Mangan, MSN ’95, opened the practice in May 2007 in Beachwood, Ohio. Their franchise agreement gives them a 14-county territory across northern Ohio.

The venture started when the two, both career nurse practitioners, were looking for a change. Ms. Mangan had explored starting a Minute Clinic. Ms. Gordon, whose father started his own business in his 50s, was itching for a new adventure, so when she was contacted by Passport Health about a franchise opportunity, she approached her friend with the idea of purchasing together. They took a “field trip” to Baltimore and decided to go for it.

“I’ve always wanted to create a business of my own, to be my own boss,” explained Ms. Gordon. “I wanted to carry everything I knew from 30 years as a CNP forward into a new venture.”



Dr. Kathy Kolcaba, second from right, enjoys a moment with basketball legend Magic Johnson in the office of Chief Nursing Officer Carol Porter, right, at The Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Dr. Kolcaba was at the hospital consulting with nurse leaders about how to implement her Comfort Theory hospital wide. Fellow entrepreneur Magic Johnson was at the hospital to plan his new business venture, a food court.



Dr. Theresa Campo welcomes attendees to a seminar sponsored by her health care education company, Farfalla, LLC.

Ms. Gordon still practices two days a week at University Hospitals in Mentor, Ohio. Ms. Mangan still practices a few days a week through the Visiting Nurses Association. But after just a year and a half of putting sweat equity into their business, the two are poised to clear a profit in 2008, and they will expand their operation in mid-October by opening a branch office in the Akron, Ohio, area, much closer to home for Ms. Mangan.

“It’s very satisfying,” said Ms. Gordon. “When you are your own boss, time just flies. Sometimes we forget to eat lunch, the day goes so fast.”

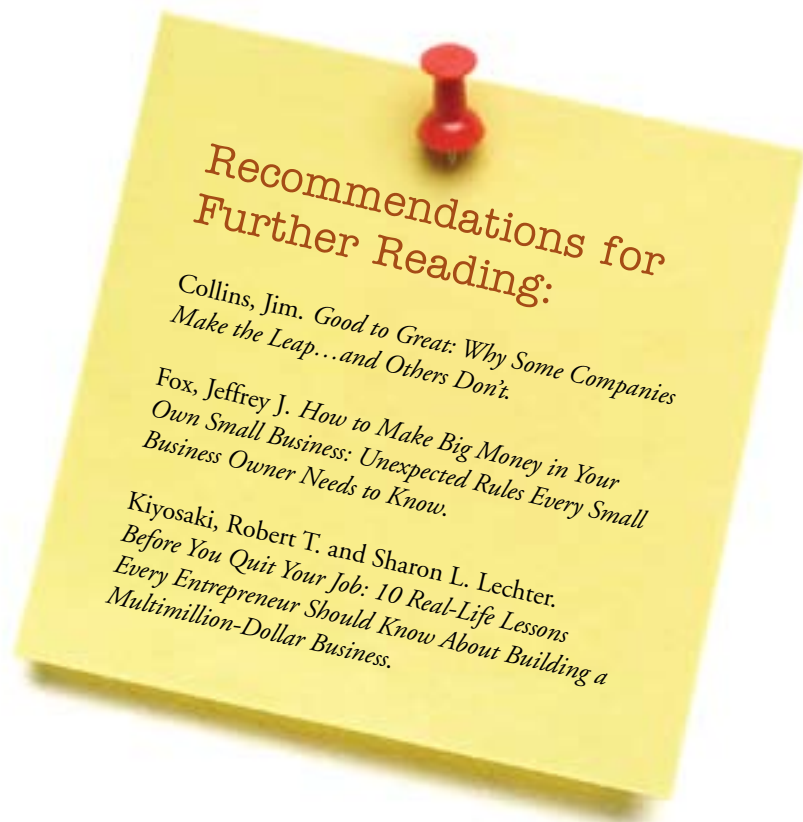
“**Energy**” was the first word that came to mind for Theresa Campo, DNP ’08, RN, APN, when she was asked what it takes to start a business. “It starts with an idea. With me it was a need I had. Taking that idea and having the **determination** to move it forward” is what has been making it work for Dr. Campo.

Her experience illustrates how a new business can start almost by accident, as a **creative solution to a problem**. For her, the problem was that even as a board certified family nurse practitioner, she still felt a lack of knowledge in certain key areas. Working on a hunch that if she was experiencing the need, there might be some others with the same concerns, she decided to organize a small seminar in February 2003. Dr. Campo took care of the logistics and engaged ER physicians to offer instruction on the topic of x-ray interpretation. She was stunned when 76 people showed up for the first seminar!

Fast on the heels of the first seminar, requests were received for more seminars on additional topics, and when she stepped back a bit to work on her DNP, she received regular e-mails encouraging her to get back to organizing seminars. Clearly she had stumbled on a need that was not being met. Thus was born Farfalla Education, LLC.

Dr. Campo, who supervises a QuickCare Unit in the Emergency Department of Shore Memorial Hospital in Somers Point, New Jersey, can’t quit her day job yet, but her business is growing, and over time, she plans to shift more of her work hours to the business.

The work of running a growing business on top of nursing takes a lot of energy. “You need to have **physical, emotional and family support** if you want to start a business,” explained Dr. Campo, who started as a diploma nurse in 1992 and has been an NP since 2001. “It can be difficult at times.”





Dr. Jeffrey S. Jones reviews a case in the office of his private practice, Pinnacle Mental Health Associates. Dr. Jones is representative of a growing number of nurse practitioners to open private practices in recent years.

PREPARATION AT FPB

For two recent DNP graduates, it was Professor Joyce Fitzpatrick's course on "Management of Your Own Practice" that made the difference in their business success, particularly the assignment to develop a business plan. "I was able to take that assignment and convert it into a working business plan," said Jeffrey S. Jones, DNP '07, who opened Pinnacle Mental Health Associates during Nurses' Week in May 2006. Building on his years of experience as a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist, Dr. Jones felt strongly about establishing his private mental health practice using a nursing model rather than a medical model. "I wanted to practice nursing," explained Dr. Jones, who serves on the adjunct faculty at FPB. "To me that means more time, it's more holistic. Patients know when they come to see me it's not going to be 'Here are your meds and your 15 minutes.'"

The desire to "do things differently, do them better," nudged Dr. Jones to set out on his own. The practice management course was essential, according to Dr. Jones, because "If you're running your own practice, you want to make sure at the end of the day that you're not being taken advantage of on the business side of things."

For Margaret Fitzgerald, DNP '06, FNP-BC, FAANP, CSP, founder, president and principal lecturer of Fitzgerald Health Education Associates (FHEA), the business plan project wasn't where her business began, but the course had a significant impact on her company's growth.

"I started the company 20 years ago with six people sitting around my dining room table," said Dr. Fitzgerald. "By the time I got



Margaret Fitzgerald, founder, president, and principal lecturer of Fitzgerald Health Education Associates.

into my business planning class, I already had a business that was growing modestly. Thinking through the business plan really caused the business to explode. It allowed me to take a closer look at my business and realize I could develop it into a very successful operation.”

FHEA offers continuing professional education to health care professionals. Intensive seminars designed to help nurse practitioners pass their board exams are the bread and butter of the business, but in recent years, course offerings have expanded to include a range of topics including online and live comprehensive pharmacology courses and instructional DVDs on health assessment and clinical procedures. Fitzgerald’s products are used in numerous universities as well as individual practitioners. Her company also offers travel opportunities with continuing education cruises.

“When I did my business plan for the class, people told me ‘You are crazy if you don’t do this.’ I realized that business practices are not that different from the practices of being a health care provider,” explained Dr. Fitzgerald. “Doing the business plan allowed me to say, ‘Ok, this really makes sense.’”

It also made dollars—quite a number of them. Around the time when she developed her business plan at FPB, Fitzgerald brought her husband into the company. Together they have built FHEA into the biggest company of its kind in North America.

Eileen Gordon believes, that “the nursing process—the five steps of assessing, planning, implementing, reviewing, and replanning—provides a template you can apply to business.” And she and Gail Mangan are working to encourage and model entrepreneurship with the graduate students they precept.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, nurse entrepreneurs bring something new and unique to the health care and health education landscape. And increasingly, they are finding that the nursing perspective is one that is valued in the marketplace. “Even during challenging financial times such as these, my practice, which is a totally out-of-network/fee-for-service practice, continues to thrive,” said Jeffrey Jones. “It’s very likely because of the strong nursing identity clients experience in the service they receive. I recently saw a new client who was a physician. At the end of the first interview I asked, out of curiosity, why he had chosen a nursing practice for primary mental health care rather than a physician colleague. He responded, ‘Because I read your nursing mission and values on your website, and I decided this is the health care experience I wanted.’ It can’t get any more validating than that!”

— Tim Tibbitts

FPB Entrepreneurs Featured in This Story

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If you’ve launched an entrepreneurial venture, we’d like to hear about it. Send a class note about your business to nada.difranco@case.edu.