

Sculpting the Art of Care

by kalene mccort

Florence Nightingale once described nursing as “the finest of the arts.”
“For what is the having to do with dead canvas or dead marble, compared with having to do with the living body,” she said.

Dr. Jenenne Nelson, UCCS professor at the Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences, is an exquisite artist of the body and mind, delicately shifting and shaping the art of care. From bringing to light the complementary therapies practiced on hospice patients to seeking out new ways to treat women dealing with breast cancer, she paints with a palette of compassion.

“When I chose to enter nursing school, I had no idea what a nurse did other than the usual stereotypical portrayal of nursing by the media or in a book,” said Nelson, who first joined the military to pursue her career and while there rose to the rank of general.



cate and Screen Girl Scouts and Female Family Members and Friends,” which taught girl scouts and their mothers about the importance of being in touch with their bodies.

The program, sponsored by the Susan G. Komen Foundation, has since received national recognition as a pioneering model.

At the completion of the course each girl scout earned a badge and a new knowledge about women’s health issues.

“Teens and preteens need to begin to learn about how knowledge about their bodies is powerful and they need to take an active role in their health,” said Nelson.



students a chance to experience the exciting aspects that these disciplines possess. The children’s field trips to the institute allow them to participate in everything from learning about robotics to playing video games designed by UCCS Bachelor of Innovation Program students.

“There is a projected need for more scientists,” said Nelson, and she and her crew are laying the groundwork to inspire future generations about the boundless possibilities of scientific discovery.

Along with providing people with top quality care and conducting significant studies, Nelson enjoys nurturing grapes



“It was not until I learned the history of nursing and how a nurse could ‘care for others in the human health experience’ that I realized what a nurse really could do,” said Nelson.

As a trained Air Evac in the First Gulf War, Nelson knows the power and potency that a nurse holds. Although the war ended before she flew the skies of Kuwait and Iraq, Nelson cherishes the time spent in the Air National Guard.

While these days she conducts her work on steady ground, Nelson still soars to great heights with her inventive approaches to nursing.

Recently, she has molded the methods of end-of-life care, focusing on the beneficial effects of complementary therapies. In a study she conducted with hospice patients ranging from ages 28-83, she found that Reiki, animal therapy, music therapy and an all around loving environment lifted spirits and lessened physical discomfort of patients.

Specifically, acupuncture helped to alleviate hiccups in an individual with pancreatic cancer, as well as to restore a healthy temperature to the extremities of a resident with peripheral vascular disease.

In one patient’s experience, the combination of acupuncture along with pain medication brought her pain down dramatically from a level 10 being the highest to a 2.

“I look at well-being as a mind, body fusion,” said Nelson. “The variety that comes with being a nurse researcher keeps me interested in my job. The state of knowledge is constantly changing in health care and nursing, and to be a part of developing knowledge is what engages me.”

While Nelson worked with patients to ensure that their final days were filled with comfort and cheer, Nelson also found it gratifying to educate youth about health. She spearheaded a campaign called “Breast Health & Cancer Screening: A Program to Edu-

Nelson is in favor of introducing complimentary therapies to control the hot flashes that breast cancer patients experience. She is also a supporter of implementing acupuncture to decrease the nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy.

“We cannot cure breast cancer yet, but as a nurse I need to know how I can help a woman live with this chronic disease and cope with the uncertainty of living with it,” said Nelson. “This is something that I believe is important.”

As principal investigator of the UCCS’s National Institute of Space, Science and Security Centers, Nelson is implementing innovative research and educational offerings applicable to the science, space and security disciplines, for meeting the nation’s challenges.

Out of NISSSC, came other programs such as the Center for Homeland Security (CHS), the Center for Space Studies (CSS); the Center for Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics Education (CSTEME); and the Trauma, Health & Hazards Center (THHC).

“We want UCCS to be a place internationally known and we want to move the institute to a new level,” said Nelson reflecting on the institute’s goal of helping established professionals of the world, and getting grade-school kids interested in science, technology, engineering and math.

On campus, UCCS has several stations that provide visiting

in order to make her very own wine. The prompt to conjure up bottles of fermented goodness came when her oldest son gave her a beer-making kit as a gift. She opted to exchange it for a wine-making kit and has since been concocting a plethora of varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon.

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