

## NURSING A COMMUNITY

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Most people who enroll in Rivier College's nursing program end up helping individuals live healthier lives. **Bobbie Bagley** has used her nursing degree to help an entire community live healthier.



PHOTO BY JODIE ANDRUSKEVICH

As the chief public health nurse for Nashua's Division of Public Health and Community Service, Bobbie Bagley '97 is responsible for assuring that the Community Health Department (CHD) protects, promotes and preserves the health of the residents of Nashua, in collaboration with the division's other departments.

Bagley fulfills this responsibility by building and maintaining relationships with community partners such as hospitals, community health centers, schools, nursing homes, social service agencies, legislators, aldermen, the state health department, other city departments and consultants. She also has to make sure the funding is available to perform the services delivered by the CHD.

Bagley started taking classes at Rivier as a 33-year-old non-traditional student at a time when her career was at a crossroad. With a bachelor of science in biology under her belt, Bagley considered pursuing a pre-med track or becoming a biology teacher.

“I have always been interested in healthcare, but felt I was too old to go to medical school,” explained Bagley. “I thought about teaching biology, but realized my heart was really into patient care.”

Upon completing Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training, Bagley worked in a nursing home for two years. That experience piqued her interest in nursing and prompted her to further her education. After looking into several schools, Bagley chose to attend Rivier. “Rivier’s nursing program had a really good reputation and it was only seven minutes from my home,” said Bagley.

Bagley earned her bachelor’s degree in nursing in three years, completing the associate of science in nursing and taking B.S. courses at the same time. Support from the faculty made her achievement a little easier.

*“The professors in the nursing program were great. They were very approachable and eager to make the learning environment an exceptional one. I was able to form long-term professional relationships with some of them.” —Bobbie Bagley ’97*



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“The professors in the nursing program were great,” recalled Bagley. “They were very approachable and eager to make the learning environment an exceptional one. I was able to form long-term professional relationships with some of them.”

While interaction with professors can go a long way toward making students feel comfortable, it can be very difficult for non-traditional students to truly feel part of the college community when almost their entire time on campus is spent in the classroom.

Bagley made sure that her experience at Rivier wasn’t only about academics. For two years, she

played on the soccer team, with and against women who were much younger than herself.

“It was so funny, because I remember one of the students saying to me, ‘You can still run at 30,’” remembered Bagley. “It was a great way to stay in shape and nothing makes you feel more a part of the school than integrating yourself into something extra on campus.”

Besides playing soccer, Bagley served as president of the Student Nurses Association for the class of 1996 and was on the Nursing Honor Society (Sigma Theta Tau), the International Nursing Honor Society and the Kappa Gamma Pi Nursing Honor Society in 1997. Bagley also received a Community Volunteer Award in 1996 for spearheading a food collection drive with her classmates.

Bagley not only made lasting friendships and great memories at Rivier, but she also made contacts that led directly to her current position as the chief public health nurse. It’s not unusual for companies or

organizations to hire people who worked for them as college students. But it is unusual if that employment experience only lasted one day.

“After my clinical rotation for psych nursing, I remember getting a per diem position at the agency where we were placed,” said Bagley. “A one-day placement at the Nashua Health Department allowed me to make a connection with the director and nurse manager. My jobs after graduating from Rivier were at a long-term care facility and with home health and hospice. But as soon as a position opened at the health department, I applied and they remembered me from that one-day experience.”

In her position as a public health nurse, Bagley regularly uses the information and experience she gained at Rivier. “I can’t say I have a favorite course that I took at Rivier, because all of my BSN courses support my work on a daily basis,” stated Bagley. “The theory and clinical learning experience is encapsulated in the work of the public health nurse and the essence of public health services. I use it all.”

Bagley’s co-workers agree that the education she attained at Rivier has served her well in her job.

“Public health nursing is not usually a major feature of a nursing school curriculum, so to have nurtured Bobbie’s goal of becoming a public health professional is a credit to the school,” said Paul Etkind, deputy director and epidemiologist of the Division of Public Health and Community Services of the City of Nashua.

If Bagley had the opportunity, she would advise students to make the most of their time at Rivier. “I would tell students that their learning experience is their responsibility as much as it is their professors’,” said Bagley. “If they want to have a great experience, they have to make it great.”

Nursing isn’t the only experience from Rivier that Bagley draws upon in her life. Bagley, her husband and two children live in Londonderry, where she coaches in the youth soccer league. “I’ll continue to coach as long as my children continue to have an interest and play. I love it,” said Bagley. ■

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\* After graduating with a bachelor’s in journalism from Roger Williams University in 1992, **NEIL NACHBAR** covered high school sports for weekly and daily newspapers in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, before becoming an associate editor at a weekly newspaper in Rhode Island. That experience led to a public relations and marketing position at a YMCA in Rhode Island, where Nachbar was responsible for the content and design of all marketing material, as well as writing press releases. Prior to writing articles for Rivier, Nachbar served as a writer/editor for Johnson & Wales University’s design and editorial services department. Nachbar lives in Nashua with his wife, Jennifer. When he’s not writing, Nachbar enjoys coaching volleyball, which he’s done for 13 years.