

Native American graduate inspired to serve others

Becomes first dentist from her tribe

By CINDY ABOLE

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In the Pacific Northwest, coastal Native American tribes have valued the tradition of canoe journeys as a way to celebrate friendships and tribal cultures among coastal communities and canoe travel as an important mode of transportation across the region. During these events, waves of canoe families paddling in ocean-going cedar dugout canoes would travel miles to neighboring shores where they were welcomed as honored guests and participated in “protocol” celebrations that featured singing, storytelling and dancing.

In a similar way, Kissendrah Johnson, 26, has been paddling on her own coast-to-coast journey. For the past dozen years, she has stayed on course, committing to a higher path and profession that fulfills her love of dentistry and responds to a vital need within Native American communities.

To appreciate the quest, one would need to return to Johnson’s origins 3,064 miles away in her hometown of Sequim, Washington, located on the northwestern edge of the state on the Olympic Peninsula.

Johnson comes from a background rich in history, heritage, tradition and cultural experiences.

Johnson, who is one-quarter North American Indian and a member of the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, is part of the Coast Salish cultural group of the Pacific Northwest coast. In their culture, cedar trees are sacred and used in every way of life from

MUSC’s 189th commencement will be held

9:30 a.m., Saturday, May 19

McAlister Fieldhouse, The Citadel

canoe making, woodwork, basket making, cedar hat weaving to woodcarving. Harvesting salmon, shellfish and other fish helped support the tribe’s economic base.

For the last four years, Johnson has called the Lowcountry her adopted home while studying at MUSC’s James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine. On May 19, she will fulfill an important chapter in her life journey that began at age 15. Johnson becomes the first person in her tribe to have earned a doctorate-level degree and is the first dentist.

It was a summer tribal canoe journey to Lummi Island in 2007 that inspired Johnson to consider dentistry. She had trained as a paddler in her tribe’s canoe family and was invited as a guest to visit the Swinomish Dental Clinic to get a free teeth cleaning. Johnson, who had never been to a dentist, agreed to go, had a good cleaning and a positive experience. At the end of her visit, the dentist complimented her on her teeth



Photo by Anne Thompson

Dental Medicine graduate Kissendrah Johnson is among the college’s 72 graduates in the May 19 MUSC commencement ceremony. Johnson, who is Native American, holds a ceremonial woven blanket created by her mother and wears a cedar mortar board that she created for this event.

and practice of good oral health care. He also suggested that she consider becoming a dentist.

“He may have been just a kind person and said that to everyone that had a teeth cleaning that day, but I really took his comment to heart,” Johnson said.

Following that visit, she started researching dentistry and began asking questions. A good student and lover of art and science, Johnson signed up for the Running Start program, a

statewide program that allowed high school juniors and seniors to take college courses for credit. By the time she graduated from high school in 2011, she had earned an associate’s degree in science from nearby Pierce College. She went on to graduate with a degree in biology from the University of Washington in 2013 and started looking at dental programs both at home and across the country. She was accepted to MUSC and the University of

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Managing nuclear reactors paved way to success.

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Nursing grad is a leader

MUSC leadership recognizes six college’s honor graduates

Editor’s Note: MUSC’s Class of 2018 first and second honor graduates are recognized for their academic excellence. On May 17, the group was celebrated at a luncheon hosted by the Offices of the President and Provost.

College of Health Professions

Master in Health Administration – Executive
First Honor Graduate – Paul Farrell Gores Jr; Second Honor Graduates – Tram Thi Ngoc Dao and Theresa Lynn Logan

Master in Health Administration – Residential
First Honor Graduates – Jennifer Lynn Firmin and Georgia Hunter Keith; Second Honor Graduate – Kelly Danielle Morgan

Master of Science in Cardiovascular Perfusion
First Honor Graduate – William Dauch; Second Honor Graduates – Alex Catlett Gum and Michael S. Stengel

Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia
First Honor Graduates – Kaylee Marie Knisley and Grace Mikan; Second Honor Graduates – Lauren Gillespie and Lesley Renae Mullinax

Master of Science in Health Informatics
First Honor Graduates – Heather Stratman Everett and Suzanne M. Lane; Second Honor Graduates – Joyce Marie Lutz and Alexandria Eugenia Simons

Doctor of Health Administration
First Honor Graduates – Dana Nicholson Bledsoe and Gail Boxer Marcus; Second Honor Graduates – Zahi R. Jurdi and Stephanie L. Perry

Doctor of Physical Therapy
First Honor Graduate – Adam Jonch Worley; Second Honor Graduates – Lauren Campbell Vann and Yijing Zhu

Doctor of Philosophy
First Honor Graduates – Courtney O’Neill Roldan and Janina Wilmskoetter; Second Honor Graduates – Elizabeth

Ann Brown and Ryan Edward Ross

College of Dental Medicine

Doctor of Dental Medicine
First Honor Graduate – Carolyn Rivers Whittow; Second Honor Graduate – Stefan James Wilkes

College of Nursing

Bachelor of Science in Nursing
First Honor Graduates – Emily Elizabeth Brame and Whitney Nagel Pasquini; Second Honor Graduate – Jessica Elizabeth Corrigan

Doctor of Nursing Practice
First Honor Graduate – Kasey Lila Lieu; Second Honor Graduate – Anne Mardel McDaniel

Doctor of Philosophy
First Honor Graduate – Anna C. Fisk

College of Pharmacy

Doctor of Pharmacy
First Honor Graduates – Staci Jones and Meghan Elizabeth Mandel; Second Honor Graduates – Danielle Genaway and Allison Paige Ivey

College of Medicine

Master in Public Health
First Honor Graduates – Grace Elizabeth Soulen and Alexander Hayes Meinzer; Second Honor Graduates – Elizabeth Discolo and Cameron Spencer Jones

Doctor of Medicine
First Honor Graduates – Lindsey Shehee and Cameron Wheeler

College of Graduate Studies

Distinguished Graduates of the Year
Bashar Wadih Badran, Clare Elizabeth Burton, Mohammed Dany, Jaime Firenze Randise and Jaime Lynn Speise

To the MUSC Family,
The MUSC Digital Services team within Information Solutions is thrilled to announce they went live with Active Directory (AD) functionality for the intranet Horseshoe (<http://horseshoe.musc.edu/>) on Wednesday, May 16.

What does this mean to you?

Previously, MUSC users could not access the Horseshoe (intranet) when they were away from MUSC without using a VPN connection. With this change, users can enter their net id and password to view the Horseshoe (intranet). The login page looks very similar to other MUSC applications, as shown below. Please reach out to us if you have any questions. Our email is webcms@musc.edu.

Thanks,
MUSC Digital Services Team



THE CATALYST

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WSI/ARROWS sponsoring June 1 Communications Talk

MUSC’s Women Scholars Initiative and College of Medicine’s Advancement, Recruitment and Retention of Women in Science or ARROWS program will sponsor a communication program, “Tailor Your Talk: Communicating Across Temperaments,” from 1 to 2:30 p.m., Friday, June 1 at Bioengineering, Room 112.

The guest speaker will be Elisha

Brownfield, M.D., WSI strategic leadership development director.

Participants can learn practical tips for communicating with people from different styles, understand the basics of PACE temperament style types and discover their own temperament style using the PACE Palette.

Register at <https://is.gd/tailoryourtalk> or call 843-876-8672.

MEET JENNIFER



Jennifer Hamm, PharmD

College

College of Pharmacy

Special memory about my time at MUSC

As a DJ, I've been able to help with events such as Phi Delta Chi's Spelling Bee as emcee, charity events for the College of Pharmacy and Alhambra 2017. I also served on the board for the MUSC Student Medical History Club

Family and Pets

Husband, Thomas Hamm II; daughter, Cassidy and two dogs, Hampton and Roxie

Plans after graduation

I'm taking the NAPLEX and MPJE exams in June and looking forward to becoming gainfully employed

A unique talent you have

I enjoy crocheting, making bath bombs and cooking. But I'd have to say my most unique talent is DJing.

Your idea of a dream vacation

I'd return to Nice, France and Florence, Italy with my entire family.

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Navy nuke moors career at Walter Reed Hospital

Former sailor ‘powers up’ to launch naval pharmacy career

By MIKIE HAYES

hayesmi@mus.edu

Lt. Staci Jones sits perfectly erect and speaks with the confidence one would expect of a naval officer who managed nuclear reactors on an aircraft carrier for two tours. With luminous green eyes the exact color of the military fatigues she wears, she’s focused on her future — one that upon her graduation from the MUSC College of Pharmacy will take her to Bethesda, Maryland, to begin her dream job as an inpatient pharmacist at Walter Reed National Military Center.

Jones knew early she wanted to be a pharmacist. For an eighth grade social studies project, she was required to research careers she might find interesting. She loved science and thought at first she might enjoy a career in orthopaedics. But her mom planted a different seed.

“My mom knows me and how social I am,” Jones said. “She suggested I consider pharmacy. She was right. There is so much to love about being a pharmacist. It’s ever changing. You’re always learning. New drugs are continually coming out. You get to help people. And, the hours are good for raising a family. It was back then that my love for pharmacy started to grow.”

And while it was her heart’s desire, when it came time to apply to schools during her senior year, she worried she might not be mature enough for college or pharmacy school. What if she spent \$100,000 and found out she didn’t like it? That worried her. Her mother suggested looking into the military. And with that, life took her in a very different direction for a decade.

In 2004, she took her mom’s advice and visited a Navy recruiter. She’d always wanted to travel the world, and the Navy seemed like just the ticket. Plus, being from New Hampshire — the Live Free or Die state — she’d always felt patriotic.

The recruiter was blown away by her ASVAB scores, she recounted. She’d taken the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test in high school, never thinking it might come in handy.

He told her she qualified to be a “nuke.” Signing on to work with nuclear reactors on aircraft carriers or submarines was a competitive and selective process — she found herself in an elite category. The recruiter offered her a signing bonus on the spot, and soon she was bound for a six-year commitment, beginning with a year-and-a-half training in Goose Creek at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command Center. She was then stationed in Washington, where she would spend 4 ½ years on an aircraft carrier.

Pharmacy school was on hold, but she would see the world in the meantime.

A MAN’S WORLD

Historically, the Navy has been a male-dominated profession,



Photo provided

The Jones family, Staci, Samantha, Carolyn and Chad, at The Citadel on April 2 during Staci’s commissioning ceremony, continuing her service as an officer in the U.S. Navy.

“There’s so much to love about being a pharmacist. It’s ever changing. You’re always learning...You get to help people. And the hours are good for raising a family. It was back then that my love for pharmacy started to grow.”

Staci Jones, PharmD

and that includes being a nuke. Jones was assigned to the USS John C. Stennis, a Nimitz-class nuclear-powered supercarrier. It was a rocky start. When she first stepped on board, an enlisted man asked when she was going to get pregnant and get out. Considering he knew nothing about her, that seemed amazingly rude.

Today, she puts it in perspective.

“That mindset is pretty common,” she said. “It was wrong, but in some ways understandable. There are certain perceptions when women join the nuke team, and the men tend to be apprehensive. It’s difficult for the team when women leave the ship to have a baby, and we have an unexpected billet gap that can take a long time to fill and then we have to spend the next few years training that new

individual.”

PRESSING ON

While she realized she was up against some biases, built-in stereotypes were never going to stop Jones. A soccer goalie, gymnast, lacrosse player and all-round good athlete growing up, she was used to long hours, hard work and persevering when things got tough. She had a lot to accomplish, needing to qualify on a minimum of eight different watch stations in order to learn to safely operate very sophisticated equipment.

So she put her head down and set out to surmount the qualification process. At first, she was constantly proving she was one of the guys — that she deserved to be there. And that included not showing emotions, even if she were sad or missing loved ones. While they were at sea, she devised a plan that got her through.

“I’ve always had guy friends and got along very well with guys. So I thought to myself, ‘You know what, I’ll show them.’ I decided to cope by staying up for 24 hours at a time and working in the propulsion plant getting qualified. Then I’d be so exhausted, I’d fall right to sleep in my rack. Racks are stacked three high. I absolutely hate crying. Let me sob quietly in my rack? No. That’s horrible,” she said laughing.

Her plan worked — she qualified in about half the time it normally takes to qualify. A machinist, she operated and maintained nuclear reactors — the pipes, valve systems, the impellers for the pump so steam, fresh water, electricity and

See NAVY on page 13

Physical therapy graduate combines love of languages, world experiences

By JENNA LIEF

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Charleston native Dana Richards has come full circle. After having traveled, lived and worked around the world, she returned to Charleston and is now graduating from the MUSC College of Health Professions' Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. Fluent in Spanish and English, Richards lived in Spain and Puerto Rico and used her love and talent for foreign language to explore and excel in the professional arena.

Unsure of a career path when she graduated from the University of Virginia with a double major in environmental science and Spanish, her time abroad enabled her to find her passion, which she discovered is working with the Hispanic community through physical therapy. Eight years after her move to Spain, she graduates from MUSC as a Doctor of Physical Therapy. She's looking forward to getting started in the position she has lined up, which allows her to stay in the Lowcountry, and she will continue to volunteer at clinics where her Spanish skills and cultural knowledge support her work with Charleston's Hispanic community.

When she left college, Richards wasn't sure how to parlay her degrees into an actual career, but she was sure of one thing: her passion for speaking Spanish. While none

of her family members are native Spanish speakers, her elementary school, Charleston's Buist Academy, emphasized the importance of foreign language, incorporating the study of Spanish into her kindergarten education. She continued to study Spanish throughout middle and high school and into college, at which time she studied abroad for a semester in Spain, taking five classes in Spanish. Her devotion to the language extended past her academic career and eventually guided her to pursue her passion. She moved back to Spain to teach English, where the pieces began to fall into place.

Through the North American Language and Culture Assistants Program, Richards moved to a small town of 5,000 residents in north central Spain and later to Santander, Spain, where she lived for a total of three years, teaching English at various high schools. Richards reflected on the friendliness of the people she met and worked with there and how fond she was of the experience. Though the teaching program is usually only two years long, she requested to stay for a third and was granted permission. During her time there, Richards taught conversational English to a physical therapist, who shared extensive details of that profession. Her description intrigued Richards, and it was then she began envisioning a clearer career path for herself.



Photos provided

College of Health Professions Physical Therapy student Dana Richards, left, traveled to Spain and Puerto Rico to explore her interest in physical therapy. Last fall, she began a clinical rotation in San Juan, Puerto Rico, only to have her program interrupted by Hurricane Irma.

While she had originally considered going to medical school after graduating from UVA, she ultimately decided against it. The idea of physical therapy, however, struck a chord with her, especially considering Richards likes to be active and participate in health care.

She began taking physical therapy classes in Spain, but soon she realized the process differed quite drastically from the typical programs in the United States. In Spain students enroll in a four-year bachelor's program as opposed to earning a doctoral

degree as is the case in the U.S. Richards worked hands-on with patients at the local clinics where she spoke Spanish. At that point she was fluent in the language.

After two years of physical therapy training in Spain, Richards had developed such passion for the work that she decided it was in her best interest to earn a doctoral degree in the U.S. This degree would allow her to operate at the highest levels of professionalism, which appealed to her greatly. She applied to MUSC and was accepted, eager to begin studying back in Charleston, especially as part of a Doctor of Physical Therapy program that ranked 28th in the nation out of 233 accredited programs.

Upon her move back to the Lowcountry and enrollment at MUSC, Richards recognized the value of her time abroad.

"What I got the most out of my experience was my knowledge of medical Spanish, which for me has been huge, because coming back here, I've been able to use it so much."

Since her return home, she has been able to help serve the Hispanic community in Charleston, which she says is often underserved, volunteering as a medical interpreter at the Barrier Islands Free Medical Clinic on John's Island. She also volunteers weeknights at MUSC's CARES Therapy



High winds, flooding and loss of power devastated areas of Puerto Rico during the arrival of Hurricane Irma, a Category 3 hurricane, that struck the island Sept. 10, 2017.

See **EXPERIENCE** on page 14

Ivy league-bound dual degree grad, both brilliant, kind

Graduate is youngest-ever MSTP student

By HELEN ADAMS

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At 27, Mohammed Dany will be the youngest-ever graduate of the Medical Scientist Training Program at the Medical University of South Carolina. The average age for finishing that program is 32. It's intense — the students are earning both M.D. and Ph.D. degrees.

"I've always set very high ambitions for myself," Dany says. "I think that's important if you want to be successful."

Successful, he definitely is. After graduation, he heads to Brigham and Women's Hospital at Harvard Medical School for a year of internal medicine, then it's on to the University of Pennsylvania for a highly competitive dermatology residency.

"I'm glad I got the best of both worlds. The University of Pennsylvania has the strongest dermatology program in the country. I'm glad I'll be joining a department that has more than one expert in every field. They have a good history of training successful clinicians, physician scientists and leaders in the field."

Dany's mentors say he'll be an asset wherever he goes, not just as a smart doctor with expertise in both dermatology and cancer research but also a kind man.

Samar Hammad, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Regenerative Medicine and Cell Biology, had Dany as a student in a lipid and pathobiology class. "He was not only the most active student and really brilliant — he noticed that his abilities are ahead of his colleagues so he helped everyone understand. You can see the teamwork behavior was part of his natural behavior. He wasn't faking it or doing it just for grade purposes."

She got to know him well outside the classroom as well and says he's now like a son to her. "He's very approachable."

But he's also clear on his priorities, Hammad says. "Dany knows how to say no, and that's what I like about him. You might think people can take advantage of him, but he knows what he's doing. Because he's brilliant, he is very time efficient. He gets it very fast and acts very fast and is done very fast. Not too many of those you meet in your lifetime."

Besim Ogretmen, Ph.D., professor and SmartState endowed chair in lipodomics

and drug discovery, had Dany in his lab for his Ph.D. thesis research at MUSC Hollings Cancer Center.

"Dany represents a true physician scientist who deeply cares about people and would do anything to help his patients using cross sections of clinical and basic research," Ogretmen says.

"In addition to being a bright physician scientist, Mohammed is a kind and compassionate person who makes friends with anyone without any hesitation. I feel very lucky to know and mentor Mohammed. I am confident that he will represent my group, as well as MUSC with great success in his future endeavors."

Bruce Thiers, M.D., a professor in MUSC's Department of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery and president of the American Academy of Dermatology, agrees. "Mohammed has compiled an exemplary record at MUSC as both a researcher and a clinician. He has matched into one of the premier dermatology residency programs in the country. I have no doubt he will be a future leader in academic dermatology."

Dany does want to continue to do research as he practices medicine. "I want to be a physician scientist in the setting of an academic institution. Hopefully in the long run I'll do some administration, maybe be a chair of a department or be involved in the dean's office somehow and have some impact on the future of medical students or residents or Ph.D. students."

"That's how I like to organize my time eventually. Clinic, research and administration, all three together."

Dany is a long way from where he grew up in Lebanon in the Middle East, the son of a science-loving mother and a father who has a Ph.D. in Arabic literature and runs a business. They raised him to treat others the way he'd like to be treated.

"I like to be greeted with a smile and have someone to be easy to talk to. That's why I always behave this way. My father emphasized that. He's a very popular figure in Tripoli and he's popular because of how easy he is to talk to, even though he's a very renowned, successful person there. Everyone can just knock on his door and talk to him."

Dany majored in biology at the American

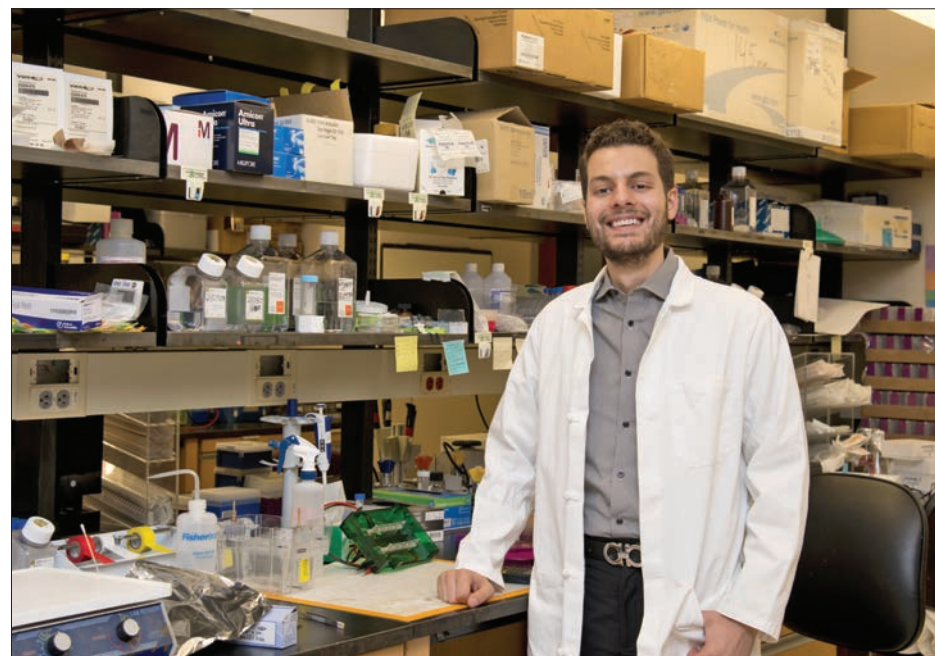


Photo by Anne Thompson

Medical Scientist Training Program's Mohammed Dany will go on to complete an internal medicine year at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital followed by a dermatology residency at the University of Pennsylvania.



Dany celebrates a successful Ph.D. dissertation defense in May 2016 with fellow students and supporters.



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See **BRILLIANT** on page 7



Photos provided

Left photo: Mohammad Dany was among five students with the College of Graduate Studies' 2018 Distinguished Graduate Award. Above: Dany was invited to give a plenary session presentation to participants at the 2016 Society of Investigative Dermatology meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona.

BRILLIANT *Continued from Page Six*

University of Beirut and started medical school. "During my first year, I switched career plans and decided to become a physician-scientist instead of a clinician only. This is when I started looking at M.D./Ph.D. programs in the United States."

The American University of Beirut has a partnership with MUSC, with a memorandum of understanding established in 2003 to bring some of Lebanon's top medical students to South Carolina to train as physician-scientists. Dany applied and won a spot. It was a big change for him.

"Charleston is a smaller city than Beirut. There are not as many people around. The

first year I'd say was a little bit lonely. I did not know anyone here, I have no family here, but I made friends of different ages. I even have a friend of 80 years of age who I love so much and we're still in touch. After the first year it felt like home."

Dany will leave MUSC with the Distinguished Graduate Award, which is the equivalent of valedictorian of the College of Graduate studies, and the President's Clinical Science Award, which goes to medical students who shine not only academically but also in the way they interact with patients and colleagues.

He'll also take with him memories of a place he's grown to love. "Charleston is still home. I'm going to miss this place a lot."

2018 YES Campaign

"Giving back to MUSC brings my story full circle. MUSC helped make Charleston my home nearly 25 years ago when my family relocated here for my father's treatment. Now, as an employee I'm grateful to give back to the place that has given me so much."

Caroline O'Neal
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JOURNEY *Continued from Page One*

Arizona's A.T. Still School of Dentistry. Faced with a difficult decision, Johnson turned to her roots for spiritual guidance. She liked that Charleston, like her home near Sequim Bay, was surrounded by water with beaches, marshes and rivers. She also knew the Lowcountry possessed a rich estuary system filled with shrimp, fish, crabs and a variety of shellfish similar to the seafood she ate from the Pacific Ocean.

She interviewed with several MUSC dental faculty, including Lindsey Hamil, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Stomatology.

"I saw Kissendrah to be a wonderful, exceptional person," said Hamil about their first meeting in spring of 2014. "It has been a pleasure to watch her grow and develop to become a skilled dentist. I'm glad she chose MUSC for her dental education and truly believe any community would be lucky to have her share her skills and services."

As excited as Johnson was to attend dental school on the East Coast, so was her family. Her family are all very close. Throughout her life, family have remained important to her. She admits the separation from her family during the first year was especially painful and lonely. To stay busy, Johnson turned to native crafts like basket weaving, cedar hat making and jewelry making as ways to stay connected to her roots. Her mother, Heather, is also a member of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and employed by the Boeing Company in Seattle. By Johnson's second year at

MUSC, her family was able to transfer to Boeing South Carolina, which manufactures the company's 787 Dreamliner aircraft in North Charleston.

"It's been amazing to have had my family here with me. And it was helpful to have my culture and loved ones in Charleston through this part of my journey. I have my culture, and it's at home, and that's all that I need," Johnson said with a broad smile.

Looking back at her early years in dental school, she can reflect on her basic science classes and how tough it was for her. Her first class, gross neuroanatomy, was especially challenging. Everything was so fast-paced and demanding in terms of the volume of information students were required to learn in a short amount of time, according to Johnson. "I got through it," she said. "I made it my mission to learn everything I could and felt stronger for it. Later, everything started falling into place. The more classes I took, the better I felt about everything."

By her second year, she started working in the labs and doing clinical rotations, feeling more assured of the path she began. She especially loved working with her hands — creating dental molds, denture construction, implants, crown preparations and restorations. The patience and concentration required were similar to the time and dedication she spent working on her native basketry or hat weaving projects. "This is where I'm supposed to be," she decided.

She loved interacting with patients in the clinics and was told by them that she possessed a good chairside manner and easily



Photos provided

Kissendrah Johnson, wearing a traditional handmade cedar hat, joins her Jamestown Canoe family as they prepare for the canoe landing during the Tribal Paddle to Suquamish in August 2009. Johnson is a member of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe from the northwestern coast of Washington state.

put people at ease.

"Many said they could tell I cared about them not only as a patient, but also as an individual," Johnson said. "Each kind word renewed my spirit and reminded me that I was in dentistry for all the right reasons."

Just prior to her senior year, Johnson and fellow dental student Josephina Silva Lopes worked on a research project that explored the connection between holistic medicine and aromatherapy research in dentistry. Their research was featured at the 2017 Academy of General Dentistry Scientific Session in Las Vegas.

"In holistic medicine, healing is connected to the body, mind, soul and the heart. What we did was explore how aromatherapy and essential oils can be effective in reducing anxiety among some dental patients," said Johnson. That included surveying participating dental practitioners in South Carolina. "Research has already shown that aromatherapy has been used successfully in medicine, and especially in cancer research, for many years. We're trying to relate this success in dentistry."

Johnson's love of dentistry and commitment to providing comprehensive dental care among American Indian communities is what drives her. Poor oral health has plagued some tribal communities because of poverty, isolation and limited access to care. According to a 2016 federal

report, almost half of American Indian and Alaska Native children, ages 6 to 9, suffer from untreated tooth decay, compared to 17 percent of children in the general U.S. population.

As a general dentist, Johnson plans to work for the Indian Health Service, a federal agency that provides health services to about 2.5 million people who are members of federally-recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives throughout the United States.

Being a native dentist allows Johnson to bring a personal understanding of language and cultural sensitivity to her patients as she works in dental practices on tribal land and reservations. She also plans to specialize in holistic medicine and aromatherapy and someday run a holistic dental practice — something she thinks will be well-received among native people because of their tribal teachings and holistic beliefs in healing.

Upon graduation, Johnson will join a small group of Native American dentists. In 2013, there were only about 190 Native American dentists compared to the total number of U.S. dentists. This national shortage means that a majority of dentists working on reservations and Native American lands are non-American Indian dentists. Many non-native dentists work two-year rotations to pay



Johnson has participated in several tribal canoe journeys that annually gather canoe families from dozens of coastal Native tribes in the spirit of strength, friendship and tradition.

See JOURNEY on page 9



photo provided

Johnson, center, joined fellow dental students Courtney Stolz, from left, and Hannah Sue, during a clinical rotation in Greenville working with the college's dental mobile health unit.

JOURNEY *Continued from Page Eight*

back student loans before leaving to enter private practice and other opportunities. This turnover of dentists has left Native American patients with a compound problem — inconsistent delivery of dental care and a growing build-up of anxiety and

distrust towards dentists. One solution to this challenge is recruiting native students to become dentists who serve in these communities.

Johnson has only praise for the dental education she received at MUSC. She feels assured in the choices she's made already on her life journey. "I love where I am today and am excited for the future. I know I can be a huge asset to whatever native tribe or community I work for. To me, it will be an honor to serve them," she said.

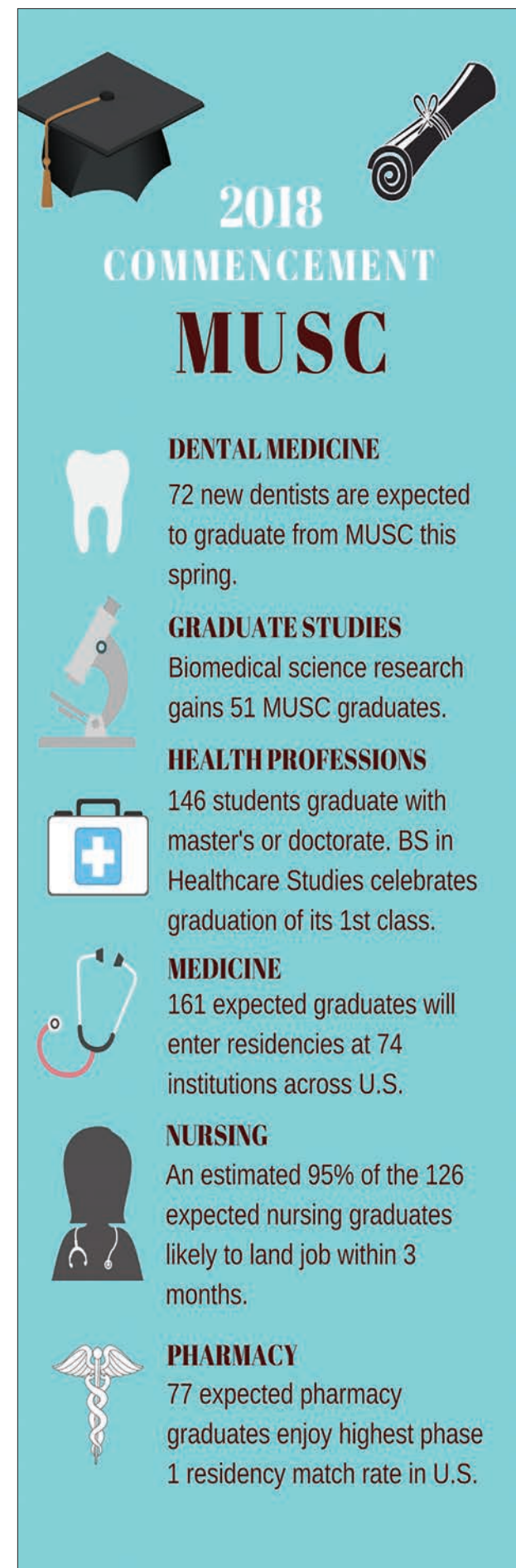
In following her family and tribe's symbolic tradition honoring her graduation, Johnson will be presented with a special Salish wool blanket woven by her mother. This prized blanket, woven using traditional techniques, handspun wool, native dyes and featuring Salish designs, represents an ancestral gift of high honor for the person receiving it and recognizes his or her honored status in the tribal community. She will also wear the custom cedar mortar board cap, woven in the traditional way, which she created for this occasion.

For graduation week, Johnson is eager to reunite with some of her family who will be making the cross-country trip from her ancestral land in Washington state to South Carolina. They include her grandmother, several aunts and local family. "We're all looking forward to spending time at the beach house." Her family has rented a beach house for the week where they'll enjoy time by the water swimming, boating, fishing, crabbing, shrimping, eating Lowcountry seafood and gathering in the "Potlatch tradition."

Johnson has always wanted to give back to her culture. "With all the support my tribe has given me through the years, I want to lift them up and honor them. My success is not just for me, it's their success, too."



Johnson and dental student Josephina Lopes worked on a research project exploring holistic medicine and aromatherapy in dentistry.



Infographic by Helen Adams

Nurse graduate integrates physical, spiritual care to treat whole patient

BY MIKIE HAYES AND JENNIE ARIAIL
hayesmi@musc.edu

Somewhere in Afghanistan in the early afternoon, an alarm sounded across a forward operating base, and Alex Brown rushed to the hospital to receive the incoming wounded. He ran to assist in the blood bank, but help was needed elsewhere. The surgical team needed help preparing for the work ahead of them. Shrapnel had torn through a soldier's forearm, and it was clear he was going to lose it. The vascular surgeon asked, "Ready to scrub in?" "Yes," Brown replied. "Give me clear instructions. I can do it." Never before had he assisted, but he was needed. Five hours later, the surgeon, assisted by Brown's team, finished. They stepped back and waited. Time stood still. Finally, a pulse. The team cheered. The young soldier would be able to wrap both arms around his family. Brown was at the right place, at the right time, he said.

Brown, who is graduating from the College of Nursing, is often in the right place at the right time. He lives by a simple philosophy: "Say yes, and see where it takes you."

As with many, his passion for serving humanity began at home. His mother, a banker, modeled caring, as did his brother, a Lutheran minister. Brown decided to major in religious studies and minor in anthropology at the University of South Carolina. Later, as a Master of Divinity student, he was assigned to a yearlong chaplaincy in a hospital in Greenwood, South Carolina.

While working in Greenwood, Brown had a particularly awesome experience, he said. He observed a hospice and palliative medicine doctor caring for his patients in a unique way. This doctor's approach made a lasting impression on Brown.

"During my chaplaincy, I watched Dr. Todd address the spiritual health and welfare as well as the physiological health and welfare of his patients. I was struck by the fact that these two different areas of care are typically separated when they don't have to be. Both, I thought, were equally important and should be integral to health care in general."

As a chaplain, Brown sat at the bedsides

"The college is packed full of learning and instills in students the mental mindset to provide the highest level of care."

Alex Brown

of the sick for hours. It allowed him to see how nurses formed their own special relationships with patients while they tended to their physical, psychological and social needs. He took stock of both experiences and re-evaluated his journey. He recognized his profound desire to serve humanity, but now it was manifesting in a desire to provide compassionate and holistic care to patients. He trained to become a certified nursing assistant, and soon he joined an emergency room team. It felt like the right move at the right time.

"I love serving people," Brown explained, and saw this move as the perfect way to integrate two important types of practices at the same time."

Secure in his professional life, Brown again said yes and joined the Army as a combat medic to serve those defending this nation. He was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, after completing basic combat training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and graduating from the school of combat medicine at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. It was there Brown learned the procedures and processes necessary to respond to trauma. Not long after, he was on his way to combat outposts in Afghanistan.

As Brown continued to work with nurses, he came to a realization. "I was watching all the things going on and realized I could do that." When he returned to the U.S., he took prerequisite courses and became a student at the College of Nursing in the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at MUSC.

As he reflected on the past 16 months, he recalled his earliest memories at the college.

"It was exciting. The first day of orientation included a round robin where 80 or so



Photos provided

Nursing's Alex Brown rides through the Charleston Market in the Veterans Day parade Nov. 17 dressed in a WWII-era medic uniform. Brown volunteers with local veterans and veterans' groups.



Brown, back row far right, with med/surg 1 clinical group, including nursing supervisor Amy Gullede.

women and a handful of men introduced themselves. We were all different types of people, bringing those perspectives to share and ready to integrate those into a new profession and life of service."

Brown's education has expanded his skills, as well as his ability to understand all levels of care. "The college is packed full of learning and instills in students the mental mindset to provide the highest level of care," he said, adding, "I certainly was the right path for me."

During his time at the college, Brown found a friend and kindred soul in Fred

Thompson, Jr, coordinator of the college's graduate programs. Having both served as chaplains — Brown in the service and Thompson at MUSC — they often saw things from a similar perspective. During their initial introduction, Thompson likened himself to Father Mulcahy of the 70s comedy series "M.A.S.H.," which centered on a surgical unit in the Korean War. That stuck with Brown. Thompson was always willing to provide advice and guidance as Brown contemplated his educational and clinical future.

See LEADER on page 15

Researcher, law student, new father triumphed over adversity

By MIKIE HAYES

hayesmi@musc.edu

David DeHart will be 30 in August. As he graduates from the MUSC College of Graduate Studies with a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences, he's also finishing his first year of law school. His journey was not for the faint of heart. DeHart, once a foster child, now shares the company of researchers and lawyers. Not only does he hold his own, he helps others along the way.

DeHart lived in group and foster homes from the time he was 13 until 18. It was difficult explaining to kids and teachers in public school that you live in a group home. Kids are mean, and sadly, some adults are even meaner.

He grew up in York County, South Carolina. He came from a dysfunctional home, he said. His mom remarried when he was 1½, and his stepfather drew the ire of relatives who made it their mission to break up the family. While his parents remained together, the turmoil hurt the children. As a child, he didn't understand why the Department of Social Services took him from his home.

He suffered severe depression. He often felt helpless. He had no freedom. For a kid who was used to roaming hundreds of acres and riding bikes miles to his friends' houses, it was hard.

The kids in the group home ran the gamut

— the ones no one wanted and those who'd been neglected, sexually abused, beaten. Others were there for behavior problems — he was one of them. Having been fed a steady diet of manipulations and lies by family members, he eventually turned against his parents. He became angry.

"I had contempt for my parents. I wouldn't even visit with my mom," he admitted regretfully. "But I finally saw it for what it was. My maternal extended family distorted my childhood reality. I realized it wasn't my parents' fault, and around 17 I began making amends. I used to blame myself and ask why I was such a bad apple. I was a hellion."

But DeHart wasn't your run-of-the-mill troublemaker.

"I was a hellion with a heart," he said, his warmth punctuated with bursts of laughter.

"I loved animals. I never picked on people. But if somebody picked on me, I didn't just defend myself — let's just say I made sure it didn't happen again. If teachers were treating me badly, which often happens with troubled kids, I stood up for myself. Teachers put troubled kids in corners. They isolate them," he said, allowing his pain to show momentarily. "Teachers often throw them in the trash can."

But not all teachers. Through those impressionable teenage years, a series of cherished mentors made all the difference in his life. From a bus driver and choir director

See **TRIUMPH** on page 12



Photo provided

David DeHart with his "best gift ever" daughter, Faith, and fiance Raunsha.

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TRIUMPH *Continued from Page Eleven*

to a geometry teacher, gifted counselor and biology professor — had these dedicated women not seen something special in him, he’s not sure where he’d be today.

Cheryl Moss suspended him from her school bus countless times. Eventually she realized something deeper was going on and took the time to discuss it with his parents. When she learned more about DeHart, she took him under her wing and a lifelong friendship developed.

He moved a lot while in the state’s custody — eight relocations in five years. Luckily, he was a gifted student. He excelled at every subject and maintained a high GPA in honors courses. Even after being expelled in the ninth grade for a minor first offense, he received the student of the month award by mail. Through it all, Jo Hood, his geometry teacher, watched over and mentored him and became a fixture in his life. She took him to church. He spent holidays with her family. She was like his surrogate mother, he said, helping him work through the turmoil.

After an unbearable year in a military alternative school, he finally ended up at a school he loved — Northwestern High School in Rock Hill. He fell in love with school, he said, adding that it was very motivating not to be in trouble. He credits Elizabeth Mixon, his choir director. His choir was No. 1 in the state every year he was in it, and one year, it even earned the No. 1 position out of 32 schools in a national competition.

Choir and Mixon helped him make it through two years in a rocky foster situation — one that came with many unexpected ups and downs. He wondered many times if he would ever find peace. After a tense situation when his foster father’s rage boiled over, he had to be relocated emergently. Finally, he was placed in a stable foster home. That was three weeks before his senior year would start, and the move would take him away from the one school where he thrived.

“Lo and behold — I had the most awesome foster parent you could ever imagine. She took me camping and on road trips. She was in the business of being a foster parent solely to help kids. If I could’ve picked any home for any foster kid in South Carolina, this would have been it. But I wanted to be back at Northwestern for my senior year. I didn’t want to miss my senior trip or my final choir concerts.”

Returning to Northwestern proved a difficult ordeal. Fortunately, Brenda Parker, his counselor at the time, was squarely in his corner. Parker was the only proponent



who shared his desire for him to return to Rock Hill and helped him fight his way back to Northwestern. The journey was arduous. After DeHart delivered a mature and heartfelt speech to a large interprofessional panel that held all the keys to determining his final foster home placement, Parker passionately went to bat for the 17-year-old. The victory proved to be the most significant of his childhood.

A FRESH START

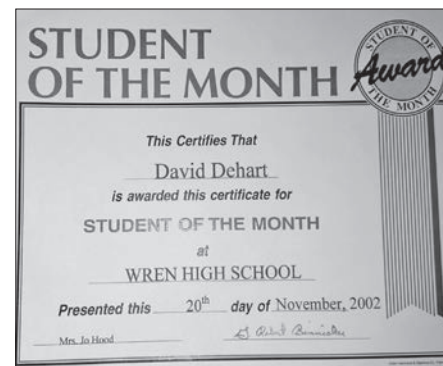
Gratefully back at Northwestern, he started thinking about college. He wanted to be a medical doctor. It seemed to him that the smartest people became doctors. With a 3.66 unweighted GPA, he hoped he would qualify for academic scholarships. His record finally had no blemishes and several honors. His application to Anderson University was accompanied by a powerful personal statement. He received a generous scholarship package.

For three years, he worked as a nursing assistant in a psychiatric hospital. When a professor learned he was working 60-hour weeks in addition to his course load, she told him he couldn’t possibly pass her biochemistry or molecular biology classes. But he surprised her and earned As. The boy who’d once been expelled was excelling.

DeHart thought doing research would help his med school application. He told his biology professor, Diane Ivankovic, Ph.D., that he wanted to do “real” research. She introduced him to Wen Chen, Ph.D., a drug discovery researcher at the Greenville Hospital System’s Oncology Research Institute and faculty member at Clemson University. Wen gave him a shot. For two summers, DeHart worked full time as his

Rock Hill native David DeHart graduates May 19 with a doctorate in biomedical sciences.

Below: DeHart’s Student of the Month Award from ninth grade, which he received in the mail after leaving the school.



research assistant, while maintaining his full-time job as a nursing assistant. It was a lot.

This experience enabled him to attend MUSC’s Summer Undergraduate Research Program after his junior year. And a funny thing happened. The biology major-chemistry minor with his heart set on medical school realized he loved research and didn’t care for the clinical side. He set his sights on earning his Ph.D.

After graduation, he joined the Department of Drug Discovery and Biomedical Sciences and chose John Lemasters as his advisor and mentor. In order to earn a Ph.D. in the biomedical sciences, he would need to discover something novel to contribute to his scientific discipline.

“I did a drug screen to identify novel cancer drugs, he explained. “I screened 50,000 compounds from a commercially available library — compounds that were all structurally unique — and I treated cancer cells to see what happens with their metabolism and how

that changes with all these unique drugs.”

His goal was to find the compounds that yielded a specific effect and characterize how they affected cancer cell metabolism and killed cancer cells.

“I started not knowing what any of these drugs were — they could have been — in layman’s terms — salt and pepper for all I knew. I would add ‘salt’ to this group of cells, ‘pepper’ to this group, ‘sugar’ to this group to see if any caused what we were looking for, which was an increase in mitochondrial metabolism.”

He did this with 50,000 unique compounds, finding the ones that worked best. There were 120 on his secondary screen, and he ended up with eight compounds that are considered leads. One, however, is much more powerful than the rest in terms of causing cell death.

With the leads he’s identified, a report of invention was filed through the Foundation for Research Development. He’s hopeful it will turn into a provisional patent. Already he’s published his findings in the scientific journal SLAS Discovery and the Journal of Biochemical Pharmacology, where he was first author on both. He’s also co-authored a book chapter.

His time at MUSC wasn’t reserved only for academic pursuits. He was a three-year member and co-president of the Multicultural Graduate Student Association. He said the organization “kicked butt volunteering in the community.” Twice they won the MUSC Gives Back Service Award, proudly beating the MUSC Graduate Student Association.

It was also important to him to give back in a personal way. Mentors made all the difference in his life, and volunteering at the Carolina Youth Development allowed him

See TRIUMPH on page 15



NAVY *Continued from Page Four*

propulsion could be produced and among other things, launch aircraft from the deck.

After only one year, her chief recognized her exceptional work ethic, leadership skills and willingness to take risks.

“Staci, you’re a hard worker, he told me: “I want you to be in charge of all the maintenance during this major shutdown period. I promise you, I’ll be here for you, and we’ll work through this. It’s going to be extremely hard and challenging, but we’ll back you up.”

He lived up to those promises. She felt blessed to have the type of amazing leaders who were willing to mold and teach her. The Navy was a good fit for her, she said.

Still, being a nuke was a tough life. They are excluded by others because of their work and the confidentiality of the reactor areas. They get little shore leave and stand watch constantly. It wasn’t unusual for her to work 12-hour days and 80-hour weeks.

But there were other perks to standing watch. During 2007, she stood watch with another nuke, an electronics technician named Chad Jones. He first became a friend, later her husband. She pursued the naval career, and he soon left for the private sector. By doing so, he became the bedrock that enabled her to follow her dreams.

During the 2007 deployment, the Stennis was involved in operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and its crew was integral to the war efforts. While much of it was stressful, travel took her to Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan and South Korea.

She loved being in the Navy, but the yearning to become a pharmacist persisted. She shared her aspirations with her command master chief and was amazed by his “gracious reaction.” He told her about a scholarship program where she could remain enlisted, and the Navy would put her through school. She could become an officer and a pharmacist in the Navy. There were college instructors aboard the aircraft carrier. She availed herself of everything the Navy offered.

WASH, RINSE, REPEAT

In 2010, she re-enlisted for four years and was stateside by the end of that year. Soon she would be back at the power school, this time teaching. They had their first daughter in 2012, as she taught full time, completed her BS online and began taking pharmacy school prerequisites. By day, she was a leading petty officer and advisor to the younger



Left photo: Staci Jones, 2004, during Navy basic training, celebrating her Fireman E-3 stripes. Right photo: Jones will graduate May 19 as one of two first honor graduates in the College of Pharmacy.



Photos provided

students and herself, a student by night. Day after day, she worked from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., went to school from 6 to 9, came home and did homework — first with a baby and then pregnant, chasing a toddler. The schedule was grueling.

“It was a very challenging time, but I had a goal in sight. I never would have made it through any of this without my husband who sacrificed so much so I could do this,” Jones said emphatically.

It was 2013. Finally, her time had come. When she called the college, Jones never expected to find herself on the phone with Philip Hall, Pharm.D., dean of the college. He put her mind at ease, conveying the college’s respect for the military and inviting her for a personal tour. MUSC was the right program, she decided, and quickly took the Pharmacy College Admission Test and applied. Still there was one possible obstacle — the Navy requires scholarship applicants to have been accepted already into a program. If MUSC accepted her, she would need to defer for a year.

The stars aligned. In June, Hall personally called her and shared the news that she’d been accepted, and her deferment was approved. She submitted her scholarship package to the Navy in August. It was an agonizing wait, but in February she learned she had received one of two available scholarships.

Hall was pleased it all worked out. “We try to make studying pharmacy at MUSC

an intimate experience in an expansive setting and provide a sense of family for our students. I love the opportunity to talk with interested students, especially such determined ones like Staci. We wanted to do everything we could to make it work for her, and fortunately we could. She’s a remarkably focused woman who has accomplished great things both in the Navy and at MUSC. We are proud to call her one of our own,” Hall said

When her first daughter was 19 months old, she gave birth to her second daughter. She re-enlisted for six more years and soon started pharmacy school with a full naval scholarship. She was ecstatic. A goal she’d worked hard for since the eighth grade was finally coming to fruition. She said she couldn’t begin to describe the emotions.

Four years later, she prepares to graduate with a Pharm.D. She finds herself nostalgic, contemplating the sacrifices she and her husband made. She wishes she could have spent more with their girls, but at least she’s always been there to kiss them at night.

Balance, she said, has been her biggest struggle. She leaned on faculty a lot.

“Most nukes are men. I never saw women stay in. I did not feel that support. Most guys have stay-at-home wives, so they don’t understand how much I had to juggle. I had no one to talk to about it until I went to pharmacy school. I would ask my faculty how they did it. What were they doing to keep the delicate balance of being a good wife and good mother and still be a good pharmacist. Having been on deployments and seeing how hard military members work and the sacrifices they make, I never want to take for granted the time I have with my family.”

Professors and administrators praise the remarkable job she’s done excelling in school while balancing so much. Soon, she, Chad, and the two girls — 6-year-old Caralyn and 4½-year-old Samantha — head to Bethesda. She’ll be working at Walter Reed. She said it’s a special hospital because wounded warriors are treated there. When she was there in January, President Trump was getting his yearly physical.

She’s excited about the future and grateful for the past.

“The Navy and MUSC have given me so much. MUSC took a chance on me. To have this faculty to teach me — I had no excuse not to excel. I can’t talk enough about how much I love MUSC and the pharmacy team and how impressed I am about how much they cared. Every single faculty member genuinely cares. They always made time. I was so impressed with all that MUSC has to offer. I got such a great education. So, I want to give back any way I can.”

Guaranteed parking opportunity for MUSC employees

To help meet employee parking needs, MUSC has leased 322 parking spaces in the city’s new garage at 99 WestEdge Street (across Fishburne Street from the Riley Ball Park). MUSC parking services at this location will begin on Friday, June 1. University Transportation Services and CARTA will serve 99 WestEdge garage parkers at a bus stop located close to the garage at the corner of

WestEdge and Fishburne streets. Off-campus parking rates will apply.

Interested employees should notify the Office of Parking Management immediately to add yourself to the 99 WestEdge waiting list. Visit <https://isserv.musc.edu/ParkitWaitingList/>.

If you are not a current parker in Hagood or the after-hours program, call the office at 843-792-3665 or email parkit@musc.edu.

EXPERIENCE *Continued from Page Five*

Clinic, a pro-bono student-run outpatient clinic that provides physical, occupational and speech therapy to underserved patients, including many native Spanish speakers. She says that without her “language connection,” treating these patients as effectively would not be possible, and because of that, she is able to play an important role in their medical care. This work gives Richards tremendous fulfillment, and she said she will be able to use her cultural knowledge for the rest of her life.

After working in both Spain and the U.S., Richards has had the unique opportunity to reflect on her experiences and acknowledge the differences between the two cultures. Her take-away? Physical therapy in Spain incorporates massage and dry-needling into the plan of care more often and physical therapists are more reliant on physicians for the initial physical assessment of the patient compared to in the U.S. On the other hand, in the U.S., as she has learned at MUSC, assessing the patient and then deciding on a specific method of treatment is always the first step. Richards has realized that as a student, it is important to continue to learn, especially when working with foreign-born patients.

“The more that I can get out there and treat patients and work with people, the more adept I will be,” she said. That’s why it is important to her to continue to explore the Spanish-speaking world.

During the three-year physical therapy program, students go through clinical rotations where they learn and work in clinical rather than classroom settings and gain valuable hands-on experience under the guidance of seasoned practitioners. To continue to expand her knowledge base and improve even further her ability to work most effectively with Charleston’s Hispanic population, Richards decided to study in Puerto Rico, though no student had done so in years.

She began her 10-week clinical affiliation in August 2017 at a hospital in San Juan, and just as she had with the people she treated in Spain, she spoke primarily Spanish. Unfortunately, during only her second week there, Hurricane Irma struck, followed quickly by Hurricane Maria. Both storms caused horrific damage to all parts of the island and cut her clinical affiliation short by weeks. Though she was forced to return to Charleston, she completed her rotation at another hospital, and hopes to return.

Following her passion for the Spanish language around the world led Richards to a much-loved career. She finds it both exciting



Photo provided
Dana Richards in front of a native banyan tree outside of San Juan.

and rewarding to treat Hispanic patients in the U.S., who, because of language and cultural barriers, often do not receive the care they require. Her travels, she said, not only infused her with knowledge of the language but of the overall culture as well. She feels these experiences have been vital to her understanding of Charleston’s Hispanic population and, most importantly, her ability to work with them.

Her generous spirit and heart for people has not gone unnoticed. Debora Brown, PT, DPT, assistant director of the Division of Physical Therapy and director of clinical education, worked very closely with Richards’ during her time in the program and in Puerto Rico. She couldn’t speak highly enough of Richard’s commitment to caring for the Hispanic population.

“Dana has always had a heart for service. As a student during the program, she volunteered as a Spanish medical interpreter with CARES Therapy clinic, Alliance for Hispanic Health and Barrier Islands Free Medical clinic. When her internship in Puerto Rico was interrupted by hurricanes, Dana’s first concern was missing time at the hospital to provide care for others. She is a generous and selfless person and the MUSC Physical Therapy Program is proud to call her one of our graduates,” said Brown.

Richards hopes to travel to more Spanish-speaking countries in the near future, and she is excited for what lies ahead after graduation. She looks forward to using her broad experience and understanding of the culture to work closely with the local Hispanic community.



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LEADER *Continued from Page Ten*

Brown said he particularly appreciated the excellence of the college's faculty and the emphasis placed on interprofessional team work — especially the intimate connection with the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. But, he added, not getting enough sleep is always the challenge.

That is not surprising considering his overburdened schedule and tendency to say yes. In addition to Brown's academic work, he works as a student nurse technician at the VA hospital, connecting to patients as a student nurse. His life as a veteran gives him a unique ability to create an instant rapport by swapping stories of military service. He continues his military service as a member of the National Guard and serves as chapter secretary of the Lowcountry Pirates Chapter of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, an international nonprofit that is dedicated to "vets helping vets."

Brown dresses as a storm trooper as part of the fan-based international Star Wars costuming organization, the 501st Legion, to support such charities as the Make-a-Wish Foundation and the MUSC Children's Hospital. Shifting that brand of care and concern to benefit the environment, he joined Charleston Waterkeeper as a member of the beach cleanup crew.

And while school, military and community volunteer activities keep him busy, Brown is equally committed to staying active at MUSC as well. He is a member of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International and the Emergency Nurses Association. He also is active on the MUSC Ethics Committee. After graduation, this nurse with a remarkable story of service and giving will join MUSC's Adult Emergency



Alex Brown's volunteer work includes supporting children's organizations through the 501st Legion where they dress as Star Wars storm troopers and other characters.

Photo provided

Department and Chest Pain Center. Brown will continue his military service and is presently considering a move to the Air National Guard to provide care as a flight nurse. He will return to the College of Nursing to pursue a Doctorate in Nursing Practice in fall of 2019.

Brown has left a big impression. Faculty and staff who have worked with him at the college look forward to having him back. Thompson is one such person. He sees Brown as the

future of the profession, he said.

"When I look at someone like Alex, I see his experience and leadership as qualities that are needed in nursing today as well as tomorrow," said Thompson. "Alex is the type of nurse needed to lead a hospital unit or in the battlefield. He represents the cutting edge of what nursing can be in the future."

TRIUMPH *Continued from Page Twelve*

to pay that forward, helping at-risk kids in the DSS system build a sense of hope for the future.

DOUBLING DOWN

If earning a Ph.D. wasn't difficult enough, DeHart added law school to the equation.

Having overcome his own challenges, he watched as the cycle repeated itself with his older sister's family. For five years, his family was embroiled in a contentious legal battle, trying to protect his nieces from an abusive situation. That yielded an avid interest in the legal system. He decided to combine his passions and is considering a career in drug or intellectual property law.

While defending his Ph.D. dissertation, he's been thriving at Charleston School of Law. He's been named an MUSC Raymond Greenberg Presidential Scholar, representing CSL, and being in the top 20 percent of his class earned him a spot in its Presidential Honors Program. Out of approximately 200 students in his first-year class, he's the only Ph.D.



Faith DeHart loves her daddy.

Combining his Ph.D. and law degree will make him a double threat, he believes.

"MUSC is the most respected academic institution in the state — the pinnacle of research. I picked one of the toughest mentors at MUSC — everybody knows John Lemasters. It was rough at times, but I learned so much. He made me a fierce researcher and professional. I received an awesome

education here. Six years of training has made me a better person, and I'll be a better lawyer because of it."

John Lemasters, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Center for Cell Death, Injury and Regeneration, reciprocated DeHart's praise.

"David's great quality is his energy and enthusiasm. He couples this to outstanding abilities to adopt and adapt new techniques and approaches to get the job done. He was a

motivator for us all. We miss him in the lab," he said.

Gone completely are the anger, depression, hopelessness. Life is good. Challenging, but good. One year ago, DeHart became a father. He and his fiancé Raunesha Heyward plan to wed when he finishes law school. They named their daughter Faith — a fitting name considering what got him through it all and ultimately to the loves of his life.



PET THERAPY DOGS WITH STUDENTS HAD TONGUES, TAILS WAGGING



MUSC students took breaks from their rigorous exam studies on May 9 to scratch ears, rub bellies, shake paws, and receive grateful licks in return. MUSC therapy dog Bodie, a golden retriever, was on hand during one of three “Wired Wednesdays” events at the MUSC Library to relieve stress and lift spirits. Another Wednesday featured MUSC first lady Kathy Cole and Athena, a German Shepherd therapy dog.

Photo by Anne Thompson

“My Reviews Speak for Themselves”

David Kent

“I would highly recommend David Kent. He is incredibly knowledgeable and extremely accommodating. He truly has the buyers' best interest at heart and is a pro at negotiating.”



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