It’s nifty to be 50! That’s the theme of the Hartford Center’s Sunday brunch celebration on the five-year anniversary of its founding. The event will be held during Blue–White Weekend on **Sunday, April 21, 2013**, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Boardroom of The Nittany Lion on the Penn State campus.

Founded by a $1 million grant from The John A. Hartford Foundation in 2007, the Hartford Center at Penn State has provided national leadership in recruitment and advanced education for gerontological nurses. During its first five years, the center graduated four Ph.D. nurses and twelve master’s- or post-master’s–prepared nurses. The center has disseminated dozens of gerontological nursing education resources, including twelve live interactive journal club meetings that reach practicing nurses throughout Pennsylvania and beyond. All these activities infuse the highest quality of gerontological knowledge into settings where nurses teach, deliver care, and conduct research.

*Town&Gown* magazine founder **Mimi Barash Coppersmith** will host the anniversary celebration full of tributes to older adulthood. Guest speaker **Amy Berman**, senior program officer with The John A. Hartford Foundation in New York, will provide a visionary look at aging creatively, drawing on profound aspects of her own personal and professional experiences. The day’s activities will include a silent auction of fine original art by regional artists varying in age from their 50s to their 80s.
Hartford Center Funding Renewed

The Hartford Center received renewal funding from The John A. Hartford Foundation, effective January 1, 2013, to continue its pioneering work in gerontological nursing education.

The three-year, $300,000 grant enables the center to continue its mission of preparing geriatric nursing faculty for careers in teaching, research, and practice to benefit older adults in geographical areas of greatest need. The center is committed to ensuring the geriatric competence of the nursing workforce by increasing the number of geriatric nursing faculty who can mentor and teach at all levels of nursing education and practice.

In addition to the online post-master’s certificate program in Geriatric Nursing Education that the center developed under its inaugural five-year grant, plans are under way for an online postbaccalaureate certificate program in gerontology. These programs not only disseminate skills nurses need to work with elderly patients, but also help nurses prepare to sit for the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Gerontological Nursing Certification exam.

“Pennsylvania has a severe shortage of nurses and other medical professionals to care for rural elderly, the fastest-growing segment of its population,” said Ann Kolanowski, Elouise Ross Eberly Professor of Nursing and director of the Hartford Center at Penn State. “Through the generous support of the Hartford Foundation, the School of Nursing has been able to develop and deliver outstanding educational resources for nurses and other health care practitioners who live and practice in our rural communities. These interdisciplinary programs will improve the care older adults receive in medical centers, rehabilitation facilities, home health agencies, and nursing homes.”

Student Spotlight

This summer, two of the first doctoral students to begin studies with the Hartford Center will receive their Ph.D. degrees. Andrea Yevchak, GCNS-BC, RN, and Nikki Hill, M.S., RN, have made valuable contributions to geriatric education and research. Both received prestigious national awards during their tenure as doctoral students.

Andrea and Nikki were the center’s first Archbold Scholars from 2009-2011. Formerly known as the Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity (BAGNC) Award, the Archbold Scholar Award program is a national competition funded through the Hartford Foundation to support doctoral study in gerontological nursing.

With her adviser, Dr. Donna Fick, Andrea has assisted with instruction of graduate-level nursing courses such as Nursing 522, Comprehensive Assessment of the Older Adult. She has served as a key research assistant to Drs. Fick and Kolanowski in their research on early detection and resolution of delirium without medication use in hospitalized older adults. Andrea was the Janet A. Williamson Graduate Student Award Recipient for 2012–13.

At the conclusion of her Archbold Scholarship, Nikki applied for (and received in 2012) a highly competitive National Research Services Administration (NRSA) Award through the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) to support her doctoral research project. Nikki has worked with her adviser, Dr. Ann Kolanowski, and an interdisciplinary team to design and implement a study of nonpharmacological interventions in managing dementia.

Both Nikki and Andrea are pursuing postdoctoral awards that will allow them to continue developing their research skills while broadening their expertise in new settings. Nikki has applied for the Hartford Foundation’s two-year Claire M. Fagin Postdoctoral Fellowship Award, while Andrea has applied for a two-year postdoctoral nursing fellowship through the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Faculty Spotlight

Donna Fick, Hartford Center Co-director,
Named Distinguished Professor at Penn State

Donna Fick has become the first School of Nursing faculty member to be awarded the prestigious title of Distinguished Professor at Penn State. The University reserves this title for a very limited number of full professors who have demonstrated the most exceptional record of teaching, research, and service, including national and international leadership.

Among her many significant accomplishments, Dr. Fick currently serves as editor of the Journal of Gerontological Nursing and is a Fellow of both the American Academy of Nursing and the Gerontological Society of America. Her numerous awards include the John A. Hartford Geriatric Nursing Research Award from the Eastern Nursing Research Society, the Fran and Holly Soistman Faculty Development Award for Innovation in Health Care from Penn State, and the Springer Award in Geriatric Nursing for Publication in Applied Nursing Research from the Springer Publishing Company.

In 2012, Dr. Fick co-chaired the update of the American Geriatrics Society’s Beers Criteria for medications to avoid in older adults. These criteria have been adopted by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid as a HEDIS® quality measure and are now incorporated into electronic medical record systems at medical centers and HMOs worldwide.

Dr. Fick’s program of research focuses on improving detection and management of delirium superimposed on dementia in older adults, as well as inappropriate medication use. Her current research, funded by the NINR through 2015, focuses on early nurse detection of delirium superimposed on dementia in the hospital setting. A second major study with Hartford Center Director Dr. Ann Kolanowski is investigating a nonpharmacological intervention to resolve delirium in older adults during postacute care.

We are tremendously proud of Dr. Fick for this exceptional achievement!

www.nursing.psu.edu/hartford

Special Thanks

The faculty, staff, and students of the Hartford Center extend our special appreciation to four very generous donors who have made a difference in the lives of gerontology-focused nursing graduate students here at Penn State.

—Dr. David Maneval, retired professor of mineral sciences and engineering, in memory of his beloved wife, Lyne, who was a registered nurse

—Mr. and Mrs. S. Paul Mazza, founders of the South Hills School of Business and Technology and supporters of students across the life span

—Dr. Janet A. Williamson, professor and former chair of the School of Nursing at Penn State and benefactor of the Hartford Center since its opening in 2007

—Dr. Ann Kolanowski, director of the Hartford Center, and her husband, Leon

We also wish to extend our special thanks to Mimi Barash-Coppersmith for her creative energy and support of the center’s development and sustainability initiatives.

You can support the Hartford Center at Penn State:

—Visit us online at www.nursing.psu.edu/hartford/philanthropy.html

—Stop by our offices in 105 Health and Human Development East Building on the University Park campus

—Call Susan Kukic, development officer, at 814-865-1063 to arrange a hosted visit.
Did You Know?

Your brain health lies partly in your own hands—perhaps more so than you imagined! Research has found that some older adults with extensive physical changes in the brain usually associated with Alzheimer’s disease actually experienced little or no signs of dementia. This lack of association between brain pathology and clinical expression of disease has been explained by the idea of cognitive “reserve.”

Complex mental activities have been identified as the leading factor that makes the difference, especially when they are enjoyed within a stimulating social environment. Older adults who enjoy playing cards or other social games, dancing, participating in discussion groups, volunteering, or pursuing hobbies are protecting their brain health by developing and maintaining their cognitive reserve.

What do you enjoy? Keeping your brain tuned up, creative, and adaptive may be as simple as indulging yourself in the social activities, hobbies, and community service you love.