

MEMBERS OF FIRST GRADUATING CLASS REUNITE

A bond like no other exists for the first graduating class of the College of Nursing. The members of that class, who graduated in 1972 after the college opened in the fall of 1968, paved the way for those who followed.

“It was kind of the experimental class,” Alexa (Eckart) Umbreit '72 says.

Thirty students were part of the first graduating class. Several of them reunited at the College of Nursing 40th Anniversary Gala at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. “It was just really fun to see people, because we shared that beginning,” says Umbreit, who worked in the CoN for several years after graduation before moving in 1985 to Minnesota with her husband, Mark Umbreit '71.

Umbreit now works in patient education at the University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview. She credits her Valpo education for setting her on a career path that focuses on holistic therapy.

“[At Valpo], we looked at the person as a whole being — physical, emotional and spiritual,” Umbreit says.

Susie (Lipton '72) Adams was a biology major as a first-year student at Valpo. She transferred to the College of Nursing as a sophomore.

“Somewhere by the end of my freshman year, I realized I probably wasn't going to be as challenged by doing primarily bench science,” Adams says. “I wanted something that was more face to face, where I was dealing with people with health-related problems.”

Adams has become a leader in the psychiatric mental health field and is the director of the Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing.

Adams says the rigorous education she received as a student readied her for a nursing career and set the tone for the ensuing four decades of the CoN.

“I felt very well prepared,” Adams says. “I'm confident that continues to remain very true for Valpo grads.”

PHOTO CAPTION: Members of the College of Nursing's first graduating class who attended the gala are (from left) Penny (Catchpole '72) Leupold, Janet (Stocker '72) Fitzpatrick, Susie (Lipton '72) Adams, Marilyn (O'Brien '72) Dunne and Alexa (Eckart) Umbreit '72.