

# Shelly McHugh gives back to WSU Nursing because 'they helped me'

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*Shelly McHugh*

Just a decade after Shelly McHugh graduated from what would become known as the WSU College of Nursing, she began a regular habit of donating to the school.

She'd begun planning her philanthropy even earlier, saying she told her husband before they got married, "Someday I'm going to be giving what I can to the WSU undergrad

nursing school because they helped me."

McHugh's generosity is mostly directed toward

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undergraduate student scholarships, because that's the only way she was able to attend WSU. She graduated from what was then called the Intercollegiate Center for Nursing Education in 1977, with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

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Despite working summers and after school from the time she was 12, she didn't have enough money saved to cover her college costs when she graduated from Marycliff High School in Spokane in 1973. A counselor there, however, pointed the way to various undergraduate scholarships. McHugh could only afford a 10-meal-a-week plan while she lived on campus in Pullman, so she worked in the dining hall because the shifts came with a free meal.

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She had a mission. "I've known from the age of 2 that I wanted to be a nurse," she said.

After graduation, McHugh worked for 16 years at Sacred Heart hospital in Spokane, leaving in 1993 when her husband's job was transferred to Colorado. For nearly a dozen of those years, she was part of a tight-knit group in the hospital burn program. The nurses coordinated shifts to provide the greatest continuity of care to families, she said. "We made sure patients had no more than a maximum of five nurses so they and their families knew who they were dealing with, particularly with children or abuse cases. Those were very hard."

She worked in a Denver hospital, then retired. That got boring, so she now works a couple days a week from home as a utilization review nurse case manager.

McHugh said she looks at her donations to the WSU College of Nursing as a way to return the favor of those benefactors who helped set her on the path to a rewarding career in nursing. "They gave me the support I needed at the time, and I just figured I'm paying it forward."

Plus, she added, "There's a little bit of enlightened self-

interest – we are all going to need nurses to care for us at some point.”

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