

MGHNAA Awards and Scholarships

History and Background

Mary Caira Award

The Mary Flannery Caira Award, established in 2014, honors Mary's passionate dedication to professional nursing and the MGH Nurses' Alumni Association. A 1959 graduate of the MGH School of Nursing, Mary went on to earn a Bachelor in Science of Nursing and a Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration while raising a family and pursuing a career in nursing that spanned nearly 55 years. The breadth and depth of her nursing career included serving as a staff nurse on a medical unit at the MGH, leadership positions such as staffing coordinator, nursing supervisor, nurse manager, director of nursing, case manager, and quality assurance manager at various Massachusetts healthcare institutions. Throughout, Mary contributed her energy, intellect, empathy, dedication, relentless problem solving and team work, leaving an indelible mark of compassionate care in every aspect of her professional footprint.

Mary's commitment to the MGHNAA and to supporting nurses is unwavering. This award in her honor is indicative of her tireless support of nursing education and her advocacy for nursing students pursuing their education, especially while simultaneously meeting work, family and career obligations.

Adele Corkum Award

This award, established in 1986, honors the memory of a beloved graduate of the MGH School of Nursing who devoted countless hours and immeasurable devotion to the School, MGH, and the Alumni Association. "Corky" dies suddenly in 1986, on her way to Easter Services at the Old West Church on Cambridge Street. She had with her a wheeled cart that contained the food for the reception scheduled to follow services, and freshly laundered vestments for the minister. As usual, she was helping others.

Her minister said it best: "Corky was our friend and mentor. She was truly a mother to all of us. She animated our living and listened to our fears. She guided us, disciplined us, organized us, set high standards and expected our best efforts. She made lists for us, gave precious gifts to us, and even named our transgressions for us. But, the discipline was embroidered with compassion; the high standards gilded with great expectations. Her nursing was not just a profession, but a way of life. She elicited from us only what she demanded of herself. Her leadership was born of love. Her ministry was an incarnation of the timeless effort to reach us, teach us, make a name for us. Her power, strength and love touched our lives."

The award recipient each year is hoped to represent the qualities of Adele Corkum – admirable, diligent, extraordinary, loyal, energetic, loving, caring, outstanding, kind, and understanding.

Miriam "Mim" Huggard Scholarship Award

The Huggard award, established in 2008, is in honor of a 1931 graduate of the MGH School of Nursing who spent her entire career at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Mim remained at her beloved MGH after retirement, volunteering countless hours in various areas, including the MGH Nurses' Alumnae Association.

Mim was born and raised in New Brunswick Canada. Following her graduation from the MGH SON, she worked as a staff nurse and soon thereafter was appointed a Nursing Supervisor in the MGH Phillips House, and a part-time nursing instructor in the Staff Education Department. From 1965 to her retirement in 1976, Mim served as the Director of the Phillips House Nursing Service with distinction.

Mim was continuously active with the MGHNAA, serving in many capacities over the years as a member of the Board and as a member of various committees. She contributed as the Alumnae Historian for the association and worked to keep the history of the MGHNAA alive. In addition, from 1939 until its closure in 1980, Mim was the Treasurer of the Sick Relief Fund, a group of MGH graduates who provided support for alumnae who did not have sick pay or health insurance.

Once retired, Mim turned her energies to full-time volunteering, including three days a week in the MGH Flower Shop and two days a week in the MGHNAA office. In 1997, the MGHNAA awarded her the Unsung Hero award, and she was later awarded the Alumni Achievement Award for excellence, innovation, and dedication to the practice of nursing at the 125th Celebration of Nursing Education at the MGH in 1998.

Mim was a gracious and noble woman who embraced change. Her exemplary core values were palpable in her daily work and in her personal life. She was a committed nurse devoted to her patients, and a nursing leader dedicated to her staff. Throughout her career, Mim exemplified all that embodies nursing. As a teacher and mentor she passed this legacy on to countless numbers of MGH nurses.

Ruth Sleeper Scholarship Award

Established in 1983, this award honors Ruth Sleeper, who was a distinguished graduate of the MGHSON in 1922. She was the Director of Nursing and of the MGH School of Nursing from 1946 to 1966. She was a national leader, having been the National League for Nursing's first president and having received the prestigious Florence Nightingale Award. Throughout her tenure as director, she continued to encourage the expansion of nursing education and promoted nursing research.

Ruth Sleeper worked diligently for the advancement of nursing and early on saw the need for higher nursing education. In 1945, she helped facilitate the affiliation of Radcliffe College with the MGHSON that continued for many years. As that program ended she facilitated a program with Northeastern University in 1962. Although the program only lasted for two classes, it led to Northeastern starting a nursing program, and began her quest to get MGH to be a degree granting hospital. Her vision of nursing education leading to a degree and her belief that a hospital with a school of nursing could be degree granting led directly to the establishment of IHP.

She was much loved in her role as an instructor and as director. She was kind, gentle, soft spoken but firm. She took time out from her busy day as director of nursing to instruct in the day-to-day world of students.

Lloyd Nichols Staats Scholarship

Established in 1996, the Staats Scholarship is established under the aegis of the MGHNAA Endowed Fund at the Massachusetts General Institute School of Nursing.

The funding for this scholarship is from the 1996 estate of Mary Hortense Staats, MGH SON class of 1937. The award is named in honor of Mary's brother Lloyd Nichols Staats, who died at the age of one. Mary was born in 1908, the oldest of three children, but the only one to live past the age of ten. She died in 1994 at the age of 86.

Mary earned a BSN and a Master's Degree in Health Education, and worked as a public health nurse with the Boston VNA, and was a school nurse in New York. In 1943, she entered the Navy Nurse Corp, from which she retired in 1964. Her service include front line duty in WWII. In retirement, she lived on a farm showing and breeding beef cattle. Her hobbies included genealogical and historical research.

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