



For Release to the Media
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A-State to Honor Nursing And Health Professions Alumni At Homecoming

JONESBORO — Seven outstanding graduates of Arkansas State University's College of Nursing and Health Professions (CNHP) will be honored as distinguished alumni during Homecoming activities, Saturday, Oct. 4.

The distinguished alumni include Sara Fenter, Jerry Fenter, Merrill Catt, Kevin Decker, Deanna Barymon, Joyce Files and Adam Watkins. The group will be recognized during a 2 p.m. ceremony in the Reynolds Center for Health Sciences, Room 222, 2501 Danner Avenue.

After opening in 2006, **Jerry and Sara Fenter** have kept a close eye on Fenter Physical Therapy and watched it grow substantially. The pair has increased the size of their Marion location by 30 percent to add more space and equipment. In 2012, the business expanded into West Memphis to open Delta Orthopedics Sports Medicine Rehab Institute.

With over 10,000 square feet of space, Delta Orthopedics is home to eastern Arkansas's only aquatic therapy location. It is also the home to orthopedic surgeons, Dr. Samuel Meredith and Dr. Michael Hood. In 2013, the business reached further into the delta to open a clinic in Forrest City and Brinkley.

Fenter Physical Therapy's home health physical therapy services also serve individuals who are homebound. They have recently expanded their home health services to Tennessee, which include coverage for all of Shelby County. They are currently the lead home therapy provider for seven home health agencies. Fenter Physical Therapy continues to serve West Memphis school districts to provide school-based pediatric physical therapy for students in need. The Fenters are trained ergonomic specialists that provide ergonomic training in a variety of settings such as industrial, office, trucking and more.

The Fenters are also involved within the community with Chamber of Commerce membership in both West Memphis and Marion, and provide scholarships to Mid-South Community College. In addition, they donate their services to youth organizations, schools and senior citizens. Fenter Physical Therapy was recently honored by Business Leader magazine as one of the "Top 300 Small Businesses of the Year" for the southern region. This award is given based on revenue growth, business achievement, positive impact on local economy and making a difference in the greater community.

Merrill Catt earned her master's degree in speech-language pathology from Arkansas State in 1984. After a 25-year career as a speech-language pathologist in the public school setting, she returned to A-State in 2007 as a faculty member in the Communication Disorders Department. In that role, Catt taught undergraduate didactic courses including introduction to communication disorders and

phonetics while serving as a supervisor of clinical practicum experiences for both undergraduate and graduate communication disorders majors.

Her research productivity targeted improving the language skills of children by using therapy materials and strategies that were inexpensive and common in the region. Her efforts in this research resulted in a number of state, regional and national presentations, poster sessions and a journal article in a nationally refereed journal.

With her years of experience in the profession prior to her employment at A-State, Catt earned the respect of her students and faculty colleagues as an outstanding clinical educator. Both undergraduate and graduate students developed clinical skills and competencies under her guidance and support.

Kevin Decker is the distinguished alum for the Clinical Laboratory Science Department. He completed his bachelor's degree in 1987 in what was then called medical technology. He went on to receive a master of science degree in operations management from the University of Arkansas in 1992, while working his first job as a medical technologist.

Decker continued to move up in the laboratory after earning his master's, serving as lab director at White County Medical Center in Searcy and later at Harris Hospital in Newport. Decker also started a landscaping business in Searcy in between lab director positions. He eventually returned to healthcare and administration in Newport, El Dorado, and most recently, Forrest City, where he currently serves as chief executive officer of Forrest City Medical Center.

Decker credits his fraternity and Arkansas State University with his lifelong focus on philanthropy and community involvement, along with time management and multi-tasking skills.

Deanna Barymon is a 2002 graduate with a bachelor of science degree in radiologic sciences in sonography. She also completed the master of science degree in health science education. She holds credentials in abdomen, Ob/Gyn, Vascular, and Adult Echocardiography from the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS).

She began her career as a staff sonographer at various institutions in the area. In 2007, Barymon joined A-State as clinical coordinator for the diagnostic medical sonography program. In 2010, Barymon became program director and held that position until recently when, at her request, she returned to the position of clinical coordinator.

Barymon has presented papers at two national meetings and one at the state level. Currently, she has one article of her research in press, titled "Radiologic Sciences Students Perceptions of Parental Involvement."

She is a Joint Review Committee on Education in Diagnostic Medical Sonography (JRC-DMS) site visitor and serves on the National Society of Medical Sonographers (SDMS) Education Committee. Barymon has been recognized by both Lambda Nu, the national honor society for radiologic sciences, and by Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Locally, she has been involved with the Jonesboro Jaycees and has recently become involved with the Community Health Education Foundation.

Joyce Files is a graduate of A-State's School of Nursing's Associate program. During her 27-year career in northeast Arkansas, she has been viewed as a 'nurse's nurse' by all who know her. She consistently demonstrates not only compassion for her patients, but also a passion for nursing.

Her career path has been consistently focused on cardiovascular nursing. Her first nursing position was on a cardiac step-down unit. Soon afterward, Files moved into the intensive care patient care setting. She also has experience in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab and in Cardiac Rehab. This broad base provided her with a full spectrum of cardiac care experience.

In 1995, she became the nurse for a local cardiologist, Dr. Michael Isaacson. In this position, she is able to use her extensive cardiac skills as she works with Dr. Isaacson to provide comprehensive cardiac care. In addition, she is a Basic Life Support Instructor, certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support and certified as an instructor/trainer for LifeVests (wearable defibrillators) by Zoll.

Files continues to give back to the community through her service work. In 2005, she served at a local shelter for Hurricane Katrina refugees. In 2009, following the devastating ice storm, she assisted at a temporary shelter set-up at Arkansas State's Convocation center. She was also nominated for the NEA Nurse of the Year Award in 2006.

Adam B. Watkins graduated from the A-State bachelor of social work (BSW) program May 2006 and from the master of social work (MSW) program in May 2011. A strong social worker, Watkins is involved in service to diverse communities including AIDS/HIV, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LBGT) organization, rural and impoverished populations.

His work focuses on providing supportive information and prevention services; he is frequently involved in community events promoting HIV/AIDS testing. For example, he was a participant at the first World AIDS Day conference hosted by the Department of Social Work and he continues to participate in the annual Delta Health Disparities conferences.

Furthermore, Watkins serves on the Department of Social Work Community Advisory Council. He is invested in improving community perceptions of the department and the caliber of students who graduate from Arkansas State. He also helps to train and supervise at least one BSW field student every year. His compassion for those in dire circumstances and advocacy for system changes as well as advocacy on behalf of individual clients provides an excellent role model.

In addition, Watkins volunteers on the Wesley Board of Directors and serves as a congregational coach, working with both pastors and congregation.

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