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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Six Nursing and Health Professions Alumni to be Honored at Homecoming

JONESBORO – Six 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. 3.

The list of distinguished alumni includes Gary Taber, Kellie Cox, Jill Weeks, Brian Lewis, NaTasha Davis and Kathy Blackman. The group will be recognized during a 2 p.m. ceremony in the Donald W. Reynolds Center for Health Sciences, Room 222, 2501 Danner Ave.

**NaTasha Davis** graduated from the Master's of Communication Disorders program in 2009 after completing her bachelor's degree in 2007. Since graduation, Davis has provided professional services in many field areas, including early intervention, skilled nursing facilities and home health.

She has served residents of Northeast Arkansas in West Memphis, Marion, Osceola, Blytheville and Earle. Also, a large rehabilitation company employed her as a traveling speech-language pathologist who served communities in Arkansas and Texas.

Davis' professional areas of interest include dysphagia (difficulty in swallowing) therapy in the geriatric population. She is certified in the use of VitalStim and Interactive Metronome and serves as a certified supervisor of speech-language pathology assistants.

She is licensed in Arkansas, Tennessee and Texas. Davis holds membership in the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and National Black Association for Speech Language and Hearing. She is a member of Kappa Nu Omega graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority, Inc. of Jonesboro.

**Jill Weeks** is a 1986 graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Medical Technology (now called Clinical Laboratory Science).

Upon graduation, Weeks began working as a staff technologist at St. Bernards Medical Center. She was the section chief of special chemistry before moving to Doctors Pathology Service in 1992, where she served as a technical consultant for physician office laboratories throughout Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri. She also served as a laboratory director for three of Doctors Pathology Services' outreach laboratories.

In 1995, Weeks was hired as the technical supervisor for Internal Medicine Associates (now known as Clopton Clinic). In addition to working with the laboratory, she was also involved in the implementation of the clinic's first electronic medical records and oversaw human resources.

After being named the laboratory director for St. Bernards in 2001, she was promoted to assistant vice president of patient services in 2006. In 2010, she was named to her current position as vice president of patient services. Weeks is responsible for patient access, health information management, utilization review, denials management, medical staff support, and health and wellness.

Weeks is a member of the Women's Advisory Council, St. Bernards Advocates and the American College of Healthcare Executives. She is also a 2005 graduate of Leadership Jonesboro.

**Brian Lewis**, a 2005 A-State graduate, is being recognized as distinguished alumni from the Physical Therapist Assistant program.

Since graduation, he has worked at NEA Baptist Clinic Physical Therapy. He has practiced primarily in the outpatient setting and focused his practice on manual therapy with a whole-body approach. He earned the PTA Advanced Proficiency in Orthopedics in 2012.

Lewis was the first PTA to receive advanced proficiency in the state. He has served as a clinical instructor for A-State and Ball State since 2006. He also serves as a member of the A-State PTA advisory council. Lewis still manages to find time to serve the community by participating in the United Way Annual Day of Caring, organizes an annual food drive for the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas and participates in fund raising for the Miracle League. He also is active in fund raising for the Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce.

From the nursing program, **Kellie Cox** is a family nurse practitioner for the Children's Clinic in Jonesboro. Her nursing practice has been in pediatrics for 11 years. She was awarded a master's degree in nursing, as well as bachelor's and associate's degrees.

Additionally, she is board certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and is one of 20 nurses in the state of Arkansas certified as a community-based autism liaison and treatment (CoBalt) specialist.

Cox has served as clinical faculty for the A-State school of nursing, and serves as a community volunteer for the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Mash Summer Program. She volunteers for Healthy Kids Expo and Run, and is a member of the American Nurses Association and the Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association.

**Gary Taber** graduated from the social work program in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in Social Work and in 2011 with his Master's of Social Work degree (advanced standing). He is a licensed social worker and a certified trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapist (TF-CBT) and parent-child interaction therapist (PCIT).

Since 2006, Taber's employment at Mid-South Health Systems in Paragould has been in multiple capacities. Currently, he serves as the clinic coordinator at Mid-South, and serves all of Greene County. As member of the crisis mobile team, Taber is responsible for the provision of after-hours crisis assessment and referral services to citizens within the northern seven counties of the agency's catchment area. He has served on several agency committees and assisted in improving documentation and agency structure.

In his clinical role, he worked closely with the Department of Human Services-Division of Children and Family Services to create improved support and structure for foster children and families in Lawrence and Greene Counties. He continues work to expand TF-CBT and PCIT in the Greene County area.

Taber works with the Greene County School District to ensure children and families within the district receive the best mental health care.

**Kathy Blackman** attended Arkansas State where she received a master's degree in nursing, as well as bachelor's and associate's degrees. She is vice president of critical care, Heartcare and cancer service lines at St. Bernards Regional Medical Center.

Blackman is also certified as a critical-care clinical nurse specialist and critical-care registered nurse. Regionally, she serves on the Governor's Trauma Advisory Council, Northeast Arkansas Trauma Advisory Council, Hospital Standards Committee for Emergency Preparedness-State (co-chair), regional leader for Northeast Arkansas Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Committee, governing board of the Workforce Training Consortium and ASU-Newport School of Nursing advisory board.

Locally, Blackman is on the Jonesboro Church Health Center advisory board, the St. Bernards Foundation Women's Advisory Council and the Emergency Planning Committee. She is chair of the St. Bernards Medical Center ethics committee and Total Life Health Care ethics committee. She also serves in the Northeast Arkansas Medical Reserve Corps. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Nurses Honor Society.

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