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December 2019



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Mother behind 'Gracie's Law' speaks at Georgia College

[Nursing, School of](#) : Saturday December 28, 2019

Georgia College alumna Erin Nobles—the mother working to pass “Gracie’s Law” into state legislation, granting children with disabilities access to organ transplants—spoke to university nursing students at 9 a.m. Monday, Feb. 3, in the Health Sciences Building.

Gracie was born in March 2019 with Down syndrome and spent 17 days in neonatal intensive care. A month later, she showed signs of congestive heart failure and developed serious kidney problems.

At 3-months-old, Gracie underwent surgery to repair a hole in her heart. It was successful. But, if she had required a heart transplant, Gracie could’ve been denied due to her disabilities. Georgia doesn’t have discrimination prevention laws to protect the disabled and ensure equal access to organ transplants. Even states with discrimination laws often leave people and children with disabilities off organ transplant lists.



Erin Nobles with her 11-month-old daughter, Gracie, who's at the center of a new discrimination prevention law introduced to state legislators in Atlanta this week.

"We are excited that Erin Nobles will be speaking to our senior nursing students," said Carol Sapp, associate professor of nursing. "As both a nurse and mother, Erin will be able to share with expertise how important it is to be an advocate for individuals with disabilities."

Nobles received her undergraduate nursing degree in 2006 and her Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) with a focus in Family Nurse Practitioner in 2013 from Georgia College. She works part-time at Jefferson Hospital in Louisville, Georgia.

Nobles was in Atlanta this week with her husband David, who's also a Georgia College alumnus with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. The Warthen, Georgia, couple attended the

state general assembly Wednesday, Feb. 29, as State Reps. Rick Williams (R-Milledgeville) and Mack Jackson (D-Sandersville) formally introduced "Gracie's Law" to the Georgia House of Representatives. They hope the bill will pass during the 2020 legislative season.

The Nobles also told their story to a crowd of about 100 people Wednesday, as part of Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Day in Atlanta.

"Yesterday was life changing. It was amazing," Nobles said.



Georgia College doctoral nursing students Angie Childre and Kimberly Griffin at the Georgia State Capitol Wednesday supporting Nobles' cause. Both women were instrumental in educating state legislators about rights for all individuals.

Two Georgia College doctoral nursing students, Angie Childre and Kimberly Griffin,

were also in Atlanta Wednesday to support Nobles' cause. The three women have worked together as nurses in the past. Griffin and Childre helped educate legislative officials on the basic rights of all individuals to have access to care.

"I have a passion for access to healthcare for all populations, especially vulnerable populations," Griffin said. "Individuals with special needs can give organs in the state of Georgia but not receive them in some cases. This is fundamentally wrong." On Monday, Nobles will address 54 nursing students in the senior Leadership and Management class. She'll also present a WebEx to 12 DNP (Doctorate of Nurse Practitioner) students in the Healthcare Policy, Ethics and Politics class.

"Students will hear Ms. Nobles' first-hand account of how she used her professional nursing expertise, power and her love for her daughter to advocate, collaborate and influence legislators to enact policy change," Sapp said.

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"Hearing this first-person account of how a professional nurse has strategized and exercised leadership to maximize patient-centered care—not only for her daughter but for others with disabilities—can make a powerful impact on students as they transition to their new role of professional nurse, where they can make a difference in the lives of others locally, nationally and globally."

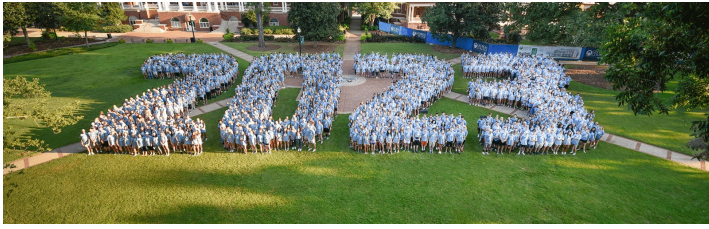
- Dr. Carol Sapp

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