For Master of Science in Nursing: Family Nurse Practitioner student Jolee Hughes, nursing is her second career. "I was in education for five years. After I went on a medical mission trip, I decided I wanted to get into nursing," said Hughes. The Forsyth, Ga. native is now furthering her education and expanding the level of care she can provide patients by becoming a family nurse practitioner.

"Since I was in education, I really understand the importance of teaching people health care information and prevention in the medical field," she said.

Hughes is one of seven students in the Master of Science in Nursing: Family Nurse Practitioner program to receive a scholarship to fund their last year in the program. The $5,799.99 in federal funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to assist Georgia in improving access to health care, education, research in rural and underserved communities and addressing health concerns in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HRSA).

The scholarship is 100 percent federally funded, "It was a blessing to receive this scholarship," said Hughes. "I hope to work in Forsyth after I receive my degree. This scholarship will allow me to focus on finishing my master's degree, while preparing to serve the health needs of people in my community."

The goal of the scholarship is to increase the number of students in the Georgia College program who agree to work in a rural and/or medically underserved area after graduation.

"Students were chosen based on their current GPA and by where they live in Georgia. They must be willing to work in a rural or HSHA designated health care shortage areas for at least two years upon graduation," said Coke. "This fall, seven students were given the scholarship, which covers the entire last year of their training. Most seniors, 12 students will receive the scholarship which will also pay for their final year of training."

In 2003 all states in its supply of registered nurses and 45th in advanced practice nursing care. Most students in the Georgia College program are from Bibb, Baldwin, Burke, Evans, Dougherty, Habersham, Monroe, Morgan, Putnam, Richmond, Telfair, Turner, Twiggs, Washington and Wilson counties. These counties all have high poverty rates and poor health outcomes in regards to obesity, infant mortality and teen pregnancy.

"We are all very grateful to Dr. Cooke and also to our faculty members for making this scholarship possible. We look forward to what we could receive these scholarships, but also for all the challenges and nurturing experiences they provide through the program," said Hughes.

For Monroe native and Fulbright Scholar Youssef Fdilat, his transition to an American very little has been that difficult. "I was in education for five years. After I went on a medical mission trip, I decided I wanted to get into nursing," said Hughes. The Forsyth, Ga. native is now furthering her education and expanding the level of care she can provide patients by becoming a family nurse practitioner.

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