TYLER BREIER (KCNA member) is pursuing a DNP in Population Health and Systems Leadership at the University of Washington and is a nurse at Public Health—Seattle & King County. He practices caring-nursing versus curing-nursing and is passionate about health promotion and public health policy, especially in regard to LGBTQIA+ communities. Tyler is committed to advocating for change through public health, and when the global rollout of COVID-19 began, he convened a virtual ethics panel with a cross-sector of 100 professionals. He sees the pandemic as an opportunity for a new era of medicine in public health.

_We need a robust public health infrastructure, and I believe that nurses should and will be at the forefront of that movement. As we navigate a post-pandemic world, we must embody equity, social justice and the centering of community in what I believe will be a new era of medicine in public health._

SHANELL BROWN is pursuing a master's degree in nursing at the University of Washington, Bothell. In her nursing journey, she has overcome many health roadblocks, strengthening her dedication to being an agent for change. Her overarching goal is to promote health equity, especially among African American/Black women and children, stepping in when others in the system have failed them. Shanell is dedicated to implementing trainings in birthing centers that include anti-bias, anti-racism and cultural competency. She is an active member in area nursing organizations and enjoys supporting future nurses. She was recently presented with the UW's Student Equity & Excellence award.

_I have discovered my calling is to promote equity and social justice... I will not stop until Black families feel they can trust the health care system._

KARL CRISTIE FIGURACION is pursuing a doctorate in nursing at the University of Washington, where she researches neuro-oncology and brain cancer survivorship. Her focus is on nonpharmacologic, neuroprotective practices that consider mental, emotional, functional and financial wellbeing.

Karl Cristie learned at a young age the immense value of an education when her parents placed her and her siblings in the care of relatives so they could migrate to the U.S. to work and send back money for their education. She continues to pursue scholarly inquiry, presents workshops and has been published several times. She is an ARNP at the UW Alvord Brain Tumor Center and active in numerous organizations that advance nursing.

_As someone born in a low-income family... I know firsthand the importance of health equity and social justice in improving overall survival, health outcomes and quality of life. As a scientist, we need the necessary interventions to bridge this health inequity gap._

SHAYLA HOLCOMB (KCNA member) is pursuing a master's degree in Health Leadership at Western Governors University. The daughter of a nurse, Shayla knew from the age of 10 that nursing was for her. However, as a new nurse, she struggled with an environment lacking in supportive learning. That experience, as well as overcoming her own health roadblocks, fuels her passion as a teacher and mentor. Daily, she strives to eliminate stigma in health care, especially around substance use disorder. Shayla helped develop the _New Arrival Refugees—Guidelines for Primary Care Providers_ published on EthnoMed and is a content reviewer for the Cultural Humility Modules Project. In her current position at Public Health—Seattle & King County, she is charged with training, practice and quality of care.
As a powerfully vulnerable and energizing leader, I believe in being human and authentic… We can’t let stigma and discrimination continue to contribute to death and disease. Addressing SUD stigma in healthcare is paramount to achieving health equity.

KAYLA SMART is pursuing a DNP at the University of Washington. Inspired by the women in her family, she is dedicated to finding sustainable solutions for health equity. As an African American woman, she sees the need to expand patient assessments to include living situation, support systems and environment. Kayla is a member of various organizations dedicated to affecting policy change and is in the Scholars Program with the Area Health Education Centers focused on serving rural populations. She volunteers for U-District Medicine and the West Sound Free Clinic in Bremerton, and she has traveled as a health care and education volunteer to Jordan, Lebanon and Kenya.

My goal in nursing is to serve those in their darkest times and be a voice for the voiceless… it will be my job to provide equitable care and advocate for people experiencing disparities in health outcomes.

MINDY TRAN is in the DNP—Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner track at the University of Washington. She was born and raised in Vietnam with few opportunities and an early life impacted by family tragedies, prompting her interest in psychiatry. Mindy’s interest extends to research and technology, especially how it can help quantify health equity. She saw health inequities intensify during the pandemic while working in quarantine shelters, and she believes that nurses should meet people where they are. She is a member of Friends of Little Saigon and was instrumental in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout in the Vietnamese community, resulting in 275 vaccinations. She currently serves as a nurse at King County Public Health—Jail Services.

COVID-19 ripped the Band-Aid off the social inequity that exists within our society and also in the healthcare system. I want to understand and reduce health disparities, especially in populations disproportionately affected by mental health and substance-related problems.

Basic & Graduate Awards
Scholarship awarded to students enrolled in associate or baccalaureate degree programs preparing for careers as registered nurses as well as those pursuing graduate degrees in nursing.

CLAIRE BEDSWORTH is attending Bellevue College’s School of Nursing. Claire was drawn to the nursing profession at a young age, spurred by her natural inclination and her own meaningful experiences receiving care. Besides helping others, she saw in nursing the unique opportunity to bring together science, problem-solving and innovation. Claire is most passionate about building health equity for women and LGBTQ+ patients.

Fueled by empathy and compassion, she brings a next-level awareness to her delivery of patient-centered health care. She is currently in the leadership position of cohort representative for her nursing school. Claire is working on the frontlines through the pandemic and volunteers at Lahai Health, where low-income, uninsured and undocumented patients receive free medical care.

I am passionate about women and LGBTQ+ patients having access to high-quality, compassionate and equitable health care. Being able to make an improvement and positive change in the lives of others is all I’ve ever wanted to do.
KARIN CARRILLO CRESPO is pursuing an RN to BSN degree from the University of Washington, Tacoma, as a first-generation, non-traditional college student. In response to the call for nurses during the pandemic, Karin put his academic endeavors on hold. He immigrated with his family from rural Mexico, becoming their interpreter at an early age and later volunteering for other families (named Volunteer of the Year at Sea Mar). He left home in his late teens, overcoming many obstacles on his path to nursing. Those experiences were formative for his advocacy in the LGBTQ+ and Latinx communities. He currently serves a starkly disadvantaged patient population on First Hill in Seattle.

While some days put me to the ultimate test, there is truly nothing more gratifying than being a nurse. I feel the importance of my professional commitment when I can build trust with patients who feel scared and concerned.

SARA DETZER is in the nursing program at Shoreline Community College. Her journey to nursing is a rich tapestry of art, language, teaching, food and health care. Her lived experience adds depth to her passion for serving limited-resource communities. Sara grew up in a farming community as the only Jewish family in the area with parents who managed a market garden. Sara became fluent in Spanish, restored tile art from the 1800s in Portugal, managed a community garden space at a health center and became a mother during the pandemic. Her sense of service, along with her fascination with health and the human body, helps her reach people from all walks of life. 

I find that caring for the human body is like art restoration. Every single body is really a piece of art, and I enjoy helping people restore their works of art bodies.

ZOË EVANS-AGNEW is working toward a PMHNP DNP degree at Seattle University. She comes from a long line of nurses and was drawn to psychiatric nursing due to impactful personal experiences with family and key people in her life. Zoë is dedicated to combining trauma-informed care with prevention, while breaking down the stigma of mental illness. She is especially interested in the prevention of sexual assault, suicide prevention and working with expectant parents with mental health issues. She volunteers at a crisis line and presented her research concerning sexual violence among college students before the American Public Health Association. Zoë is a member of the Equity and Social Justice Committee at Seattle University. It is on all of us as nurses to create health care that is free of disparity and inequity. Everyone deserves access to care, and we need to be the ones that provide care worthy of people’s human dignity.

ASMEROM GHIRMAI attends Seattle University, works nearly full-time, volunteers and maintains a high GPA. Immigrating to the U.S. in 2017, Asmerom has seen his dream of becoming a nurse go from a mere glimmer of hope to a reality. Growing up as a refugee in Sudan as well as in his native Eritrea, he saw an extreme lack of health care. His desire to become a nurse was ignited at age 12 when he witnessed a person die from a car accident. Not being able to help, nor being able to find anyone skilled to assist, left a mark. Asmerom is known for his positive attitude, initiative and ease with technology. He is determined not only to provide care to those in need but also to foster civility.

By practicing three pillars of civility—consciousness, creativity and community—we can construct a civilized society that gives social justice and equity more value.

RODA HASSAN is a first-generation college student at Seattle University. As a Black, Muslim woman from an immigrant family, she is eager to be the change she wants to see in health care. Roda is pleased to reflect and advocate for the Somali and other underserved communities and is passionate about promoting healthy lifestyles and mental wellness. The adaptability she fostered as an immigrant now provides her with a keen sensitivity to the needs of others. Roda volunteers for the Somali Health Board and Somali Community Services and is a member of the Muslim Student Association and the African Student Association. During the pandemic, she organized a food drive that grossed over 3,000 pounds of food.

I want to become a nurse not only to help individuals recover from existing diseases but also to help promote healthy lifestyles for prevention and effective patient education.

IDANIS CRUZ MARTINEZ is studying public health nursing at the University of Washington. She is committed to serving the needs of Latinx farm worker communities like the one where she grew up. As an advocate, educator, and communicator, Idanis uses a multi-
A pronged approach that goes beyond the clinic to include outreach, mental health education, research and policy changes to address racism and discrimination. Idanis looks to a future where she can encourage Latinx youth to enter the health care field, especially those with fluency in indigenous Latin American dialects and cultures. She is the co-founder of the Anti-Racism Equity and Action Taskforce at the University of Washington.

As a nurse, one of my goals is to make sure that quality care is provided to the most vulnerable and to hold others in the field accountable for the quality of services being provided. I want to be the health care provider that my parents and community never had.

TAMARA MARQUEZ—a bilingual, first-generation college student and the first health professional in her family—is in the nursing program at Seattle University. Her interest in nursing began with volunteer work in her low-income, rural farming community, where people of color struggled to reach their goals due to a lack of resources. She is passionate about health education, fighting medical misinformation, providing affordable care and building a health care workforce that reflects the diversity of the community it serves. Tamara has the compassionate heart of a nurse and shows up as an advocate, interpreter, teacher and leader to those who have no voice. Her long-term plans include earning a master’s degree.

My goal as a nurse is to care for those who feel unheard and uncared for. To make a stranger with a completely different background feel comfortable and accepted in a clinical setting.

DIRSAN NURGA is studying nursing at Lake Washington Institute of Technology. She grew up in a small town in Ethiopia, where she was the caregiver for her brother, who faced stigma and rejection, inspiring her to become a psychiatric nurse. She is keenly focused on community education around physical and mental health, as well as fighting misinformation that results in harmful practices. Dirsan is also passionate about affordable preventative care and addressing the individual needs of each patient. She cares deeply for nurses and the nursing profession and looks forward to impacting policies that ensure a safe environment for nurses.

Nurses are central in the provision of care, patient advocacy and policy-making. As a result, it becomes imperative to protect nurses and the profession... I am committed to engaging in advocacy in order to promote policies and practices that will make nursing as safe as possible.

SERAH OMBONGI is a first-generation student at Seattle University. She grew up in a slum in Kenya, struggling to survive and at risk for child marriage and FGM. This reality, and inspiration from her mother, led Serah to become fearless in her pursuit of an education and a new life as a nurse. Working on the frontlines during the pandemic showed her the importance of nurse self-care and advocacy. She is especially passionate about empowering women and girls and being an agent for change. She is an Alfie Scholar at Seattle University.

My desire to be a nurse was driven by the experience I had when growing up in the slums... I have been fortunate that I overcame all that, and I believe this will enable me to give it back to the community and serve as a good example and inspiration to those who are facing similar obstacles and challenges in life.

KATE WRIGHT is a clinical social worker working toward her DNP in psychiatric mental health at Seattle University. Working side by side with psychiatric nurses, she was captivated by their immediate positive impact on patients in crisis. Despite the pandemic, she knew she was ready to go back to school. Her areas of interest include female body image and eating disorders, childhood neurocognitive disorders and helping parents with child-rearing. In addition, she is captivated by neuroscience and psychopharmacology. Kate is described as curious, open-minded, empathetic and thoughtful. She serves low-income clients and volunteers with Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, offering pro bono mental health evaluations.

I believe my background as a social worker enhances my ability to engage with issues of injustice, and my identity as an older learner also brings maturity and life experience.

This year, King County Nurses Association awards 18 scholarships of $4,000 each to deserving nursing students from King County. Recipients include students seeking initial licensure as RNs or in graduate entry programs, as well as registered nurses returning to earn BSNs or advanced degrees. Students receiving scholarships demonstrate an understanding of equity and social justice through creative ideas to improve health disparities in our community. They embody the values of collaboration, compassion, innovation, and community wellness. Since 1993, KCNA has awarded $677,750 to 305 deserving students.