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UConn Alumni Awards Honor Excellence in Nursing

STORRS, CONN – The University of Connecticut School of Nursing will honor five alumni during the School’s Reflection of Excellence ceremony on October 30, 2009.

Cynthia Chernecky will receive The Beverly L. Koerner Outstanding Alumni Award for Education in Nursing. Rich DiPentima will be honored with The Eleanor K. Gill Outstanding Alumni Award for Clinical Excellence in Nursing, Pamela A. Thompson will receive The Carolyn Ladd Widmer Outstanding Alumni Award for Leadership in Nursing, and The Josephine A. Dolan Distinguished Service Award will be presented to Congressman Joe Courtney and Barbara Hatcher.

Cynthia Chernecky ’77, PhD, RN, AOCN, FAAN is a professor at Medical College of Georgia’s School of Nursing and Graduate Studies. She received a MN from the University of Pittsburg and a PhD from Case Western Reserve University. Throughout her career she has focused her research on oncology, venous access devices, and vascular technologies. Chernecky is the editor or author of more than twenty textbooks, one of which has been recognized by the American Journal of Nursing as Book of the Year, while four others have been on the Brandon/Hill Selected List of Nursing Publications.

Rich DiPentima ’74, MPH, RN is currently a Representative in the New Hampshire State House where he is a member of the Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee. Before becoming a Representative in New Hampshire, DiPentima was Deputy Public Health Director of
the Manchester Health Department for eight years. He received his BS in Nursing from the University of Connecticut in 1974 and his MPH from the University of Oklahoma in 1975. Before receiving his BS he served in the United States Air Force from 1967 to 1971.

**Pamela A. Thompson** ’71, MS, RN, FAAN earned her BS at the University of Connecticut and her MS at the University of Rochester. Thompson is the Chief Executive Officer of the American Organization of Nurse Executives where she oversees all administration operations of the organization. AONE represents over 6,400 nurse leaders who innovate health care. Along with her duty as the Chief Executive Officer she focuses on practice issues, organizational issues, and research. She has been a member of the National Patient Safety Foundation since 2002 and currently is the Chair of its Board of Directors.

**Congressman Joe Courtney** ’78 JD represents Connecticut’s Second Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives. He currently is a member of the Education and Labor Committee where he continues to help families fight rising tuition costs. Before being elected as Congressman in 2006, he represented Vernon in the Connecticut General Assembly from 1987 to 1994 where he was chairman for both the Public Health and Human Services committees. Congressman Joe Courtney also chaired the Connecticut Blue Ribbon Commission on Universal Health Insurance. In 1994, Congressman Joe Courtney was recognized by *Connecticut Magazine* in a legislative poll as “Most Conscientious” and as the “Democrat Most Admired by Republicans” for his bipartisan efforts.

**Barbara Hatcher** ’67, PhD, RN, FAAN has been recognized internationally for her efforts in social justice, human rights, health equity, global health diplomacy and the elimination of global health inequities. In 2008 she was named Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and was also presented the Trailblazer Award from the National Black Nurses’ Association. She is presently the Director of the Center for Learning and Global Public health at the American Public Health Association.

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**Former Dean Highlights**

**Eleanor Keating Gill, BA, MN, MS**
Dean 1967-1979

Dean Gill received her bachelor’s degree from Brown College in 1935, her master’s from Yale University in 1938 and a second master’s from Boston University in 1960. Before coming to UConn, Dean Gill taught in the School of Nursing at Boston University and pioneered the role of the clinical nurse specialist at Boston University Medical Center. UConn School of Nursing expanded dramatically during her deanship. She consolidated and revised the undergraduate curriculum by combining medical specialties, thus enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning nursing, ultimately improving health care.

Carolyn Ladd Widmer, BA, BN, MA

Dean 1942-1967

Dean Widmer was the founding Dean of UConn School of Nursing. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wellesley College in 1923, she earned her bachelor’s degree in nursing from Yale University School of Nursing in 1929. After her graduation, she organized public health nursing in Bogotá, Colombia. In 1932, she became the Dean of the School of Nursing at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon. With the threat of war in Europe, she returned to the US and, in 1942, opened the UConn School of Nursing. Within her time as dean, UConn was rated in the top 25% of the nation’s schools of nursing. After retirement, she continued her international nursing leadership.

Beverly Koerner, ’70 BN, ’73 MS, PhD, FAAN

Dean 1988-1993

Dean Koerner is an emeritus professor at the UConn School of Nursing. She graduated from the UConn Honors Program with a bachelor’s degree in Nursing in 1970, followed by an MS in nursing and a PhD in educational psychology. While dean, she raised alumni funds to establish the Josephine A. Dolan Room, and the Widmer sons dedicated the Carolyn Ladd Widmer Room, both in Storrs Hall. The PhD program was approved by the UConn Board of Trustees under her leadership. Both the primary care and the acute nurse practitioner programs were established during this time.