When Pat Duclos-Miller talks about nursing, her enthusiasm is extreme. “Just give me the pom poms,” she declares, “because I’m the biggest cheerleader for nursing.”

Pat’s passion for her profession, along with a radiance that belies her 36 years in the field, makes this writer momentarily wistful that she never considered becoming a nurse. Pat still remembers her first job in 1974 and the head nurse – Lois Gerner – who thrust her into the thick of it, and taught her how to survive and thrive. Pat was the first baccalaureate graduate on their unit and Gerner wanted her to succeed. She took young Pat under her wings, setting exceedingly high standards that were unlike anything the new nurse had experienced in her life. But the supportive relationship was instrumental for Duclos-Miller, who was so positively impacted that she uses the same template for her students.

Pat’s commitment to nursing students spans over 15 years at the graduate, baccalaureate, and associate degree levels. She is Board Certified in Nursing Administration by ANCC and participates at both the state and national level in nursing leadership. Dedicated to excellence in nursing, Pat works at a local hospital with nursing staff and management to integrate performance improvement and excellence at the bedside. It was her complete devotion to nursing excellence that drew Pat back to the academic arena six years ago. To impart to every student she comes in contact with love of the nursing profession and the ability to succeed in delivering excellent patient care.

“Pat spends a great deal of time advising students and supporting strategies for their success,” said Dr. Cynthia Adams, Director of Nursing at Capital Community College. “She has gained the respect of her peers and demonstrated initiative and leadership in so many areas.” Pat has been instrumental in bringing Sim-Man (Human Patient Simulator) and Micro-Sim, a computerized interactive patient simulation program, to the nursing labs. According to Dr. Adams this has enhanced interactive learning for nursing students. Despite numerous job opportunities nationwide, the field of nursing has a large turnover rate for first-year nurses. Watching new local graduates drop out after their first year in the field motivated Pat to write the book “Stressed Out About Your First Year as a Nurse”, to help new nurses navigate the first year and understand the stages of growth in competence and confidence.

Four years ago, Pat started a Connecticut Student Nurses’ Association chapter at Capital Community College to promote professional nursing, and this year she implemented a mentoring program that is close to her heart and taking it further: Senior students mentoring freshman students. Students on the cusp of finishing their nursing program reaching out and supporting students just beginning their academic experience benefits both groups, Pat says. Seniors have endured the demands of nursing school and understand the inevitable emotional highs and lows that await the nursing newbies. Sharing their experiences with the younger students propels seniors into leadership/mentor roles, helping them grow personally and professionally.

Hearing from those who have recently gone through what they are about to embark upon instantly helps younger students feel more positive and puts their stress into perspective. From there, they can develop a practical plan for coping with what they know is coming their way.

Patricia Duclos-Miller has all the professional credentials, and then some, but it is her fire to teach and reach students that has nursing grads at Capital Community College writing thank you notes that no one can read without crying.

“If I make an impression on one person, I’ve succeeded,” she said. “That has always been my goal.”