



Nursing alumna Lisa Feierstein takes her career beyond the hospital

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By Anthony
Langley
(B.S.'16/MC)



Like many teenagers, **Lisa Feierstein** (B.S.'78/N) dreamed of becoming independent after high school and making an impact on the world through meaningful work. After weighing her options, she decided that becoming a nurse would be the best way to make her way in the world.

"I saw nursing as a way to fuel my desire," she says. "I could make a living and effect change, why wouldn't I go for it?"

She enrolled at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing and, once on campus, was immersed into both academic and clinical work that gave her the tools and knowledge she needed to forge her own path.

"Looking back on it now, we were doing incredible things at a very young age," Feierstein says. "It was intense, but I wouldn't go back and change a single thing."

She graduated with a bachelor's degree and initially worked at the then-Medical College of Virginia Hospitals. Feierstein went on to work in home health, public health and medical sales before deciding to return to school. With the goal of growing into a leadership role, she enrolled at Western New England University where she earned an M.B.A. with a minor in health care administration.

"I understood that health care was a business, but after getting my M.B.A., I was starting to understand its inner workings," she says. "It was a natural fit for me."

A few years later, she married her husband, Steve, and the couple decided to take destiny into their own hands and start a business. After talking to industry

experts and conducting formal research, they leveraged their respective strengths and started Active Healthcare Inc. Partnering with nurses, physicians and other health care professionals throughout North Carolina, the company has provided medical equipment to those with asthma and diabetes statewide for the past 27 years.

"Everything I learned as a nurse and at VCU was a prerequisite for owning my own business," she says. "I learned collaboration, leadership and, most importantly, how to empower people to take back their health."

Wanting to give back to the program that gave her the skills she still relies on today, in 2016 Feierstein and her husband established the Feierstein Leadership and Innovation Fund in the VCU School of Nursing. The fund supports a lectureship series or other activities that propel nurses to influence health care through innovation, leadership and entrepreneurship.

The inaugural Feierstein Lecture, held in July, drew 150 students, faculty, alumni and health care professionals to the school to hear Michael R. Bleich, Ph.D., RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, CEO of NursDynamics LLC, talk about how nurse caregivers, educators and scientists possess a unique perspective that makes them ideal innovators.

"When alumni invest in your school that makes it even more special because they're demonstrating they want others to obtain a great education like they received," says Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, dean of the School of Nursing. "Lisa went on to become a game changer in her industry and has established this fund with her husband to help us develop nurse leaders who will shape the future of our profession."

Going forward, Feierstein hopes that the fund will empower nurses to think about their skills in a creative way.

"Nurses have the capability to chart the course of health care as we move forward," she says. "I wanted to provide them the same opportunities that I had and give them the tools to push the envelope even further."