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PHILLIPS BETH ISRAEL SALUTES 84 NEW GRADUATES AND BIDS ASSOCIATE DEAN FOND FAREWELL

June 2, 2011 -- Valedictorian Miriam Wrightman Lakein topped the Class of 2011 at graduation exercises for the Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing (PBISN) on Wednesday, June 1st held in the Fashion Institute of Technology auditorium.

Ms. Lakein, summa cum laude, who challenged her fellow graduates “to embrace the future with open arms,” was among 84 students who received an associate degree in applied science which qualifies each one to take the qualifying exam to become a registered nurse. She received the Seymour J. Phillips Award for highest scholastic achievement from PBISN Trustee Co-chair Janet Green, granddaughter of the philanthropist for whom the school is named.

Salutatorians who achieved magna cum laude and honored during pinning ceremonies before graduation were Ashley Carr LeWinn and Mark Rubin, the recipient of the Rita Hillman Award for academic excellence coupled with compassionate care.

Also graduating with high honors (magna cum laude) are: Bracha Doman; Claudia E. Jungkunst; Anna Kowerska, Elin Kristiansson, who received the Sherman and Paula Raskin Award for academic and clinical excellence; Elizabeth Calzada Lee; Nechama D. Spielman, and Sharon Turner, who won the Barry Brazeau Award for clinical excellence in Pediatrics.

Cum laude status was achieved by Emily Burman; Allison Kimbrough Clark; Shaina Mushka Federman; Elina Jakubowicz; Eleanor Kilsby, who received the Libby P. Marcus Award for academic and clinical excellence in nursing; Andrew Michael Lichtig and Elyse Sochet.

Alumna Annette Stauber Cohn '41, in whose honor the eponymous award was named by her daughter Martha C. Romney, RN, JD, MPH, recognized Claudia Jungkunst for fostering the family tradition in nursing. Ms. Jungkunst was among the Hillman Scholars who worked on the book, “I Want To Be A Nurse, Do You?” which featured her young daughter Leila. Mrs. Stauber-Cohn recently published “out—of TIME and PLACE,” a memoir about her life as a student nurse.

The David L. Podell Award for consideration of patient’s welfare went to John Pasha, a Shakespearean actor who is now also a nurse. Mr. Pasha also shared the Rose M. Hauer Award of the PBISN Alumni Association for outstanding contribution to the school with Salvatore Battaglia. He, along with Robin Pelkki, also received the Dr. Eileen Melnick Award for team spirit.

The Fanny and Charles Karpas Award for excellence in nursing care and compassion in the Beth Israel tradition went to Anamari Bulatovic; the Gerald Bokow Award for clinical excellence and compassion in Pediatrics went to Mike Bryant.

Alumna Ruth Merdinger '51, whose parents died in the Holocaust, presented the The Dr. Chaim and Pearl Weiss Award for success in the face of challenges to Sharon Lawi.

There was a tinge of sadness amid the happy occasion as Dean Janet Mackin, RN, EdD, and members of the faculty and staff paid tribute to Associate Dean Marilyn Parker, RN, EdD, who is leaving after 19 years of dedicated service.

“Dr. Parker is brilliant and always on point,” said Assistant Dean Bernice Pass-Stern, MS, MEd.

“She is the epitome of a nurse leader and educator, and has been a mentor and a friend,” remarked Program Chair and Associate Professor Lynn Rubenstein, MA, RN-BC, who will be succeeding Dr. Parker as Associate Dean.

Commencement speaker Karen A. Ballard, MA, RN, FAAN, President, New York State Nurses Association, counseled the class “to remember that you are never not a nurse,” -- a double negative that in math terms becomes positive, as the new nurses nodded in agreement. “Nursing is the finest of the fine arts. Experience and enjoy it - never forget what made you go into nursing.”

Dean Mackin thanked the graduates for their quilt gift to the school – “a fabulous metaphor that reflects their diverse quilt of experiences.” With an average age of 27, the class includes a former flight attendant, a photographer, a Shakespearean actor, and a customer service VP. She noted that about 50 percent of the graduates already had bachelor’s degrees before going into nursing as a second career.

Next challenge for the graduates: NCLEX – the nursing exam that leads to an RN license!