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HELPING HANDS: PHARMD CLASS OF 2000 HOSTS VIRTUAL 20-YEAR REUNION



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Editor's Note: *This post is part of a series of [Helping Hands](#) stories authored by School of Pharmacy faculty, staff, students, trainees, and alumni who stepped up to assist their family and friends, colleagues, and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

The PharmD Class of 2000, also known as the “Get Along Gang,” celebrated its 20th reunion on June 6. As a class, we worked hard for that title, and while over the years, we have all gone our own paths, many of us still feel as though our graduation was just yesterday. It’s like none of us skipped a beat. Over the years, we managed to coordinate five and 10-year reunions. We missed our 15th year reunion due to threatening storms in the area. As our 20th reunion approached, we felt the need to reconnect.

Planning the reunion was no easy feat. The self-appointed event planners included Tina Bayuse (Houston, Texas), Suneel Kudaravalli (Washington, DC), Kristin Mack (Pittsburgh, Pa.), Jennifer Evans (Olney, Md.), and me (Ellicott City Md.). We mostly communicated via email in the beginning, with our earliest emails starting in November 2019.

We polled our classmates and decided on a gathering in June. We booked a location and started exploring catering options. In March, it was obvious that we were not going to have our in-person event like we hoped because of the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 9, we sent a notice to the class – instead of meeting in-person, we were going to host our reunion virtually.

Many more emails and late-night Zoom calls later, the planning team got ready for our event on June 6. Now that we were virtual, we were able to recruit 40 members of our class (almost half of our total 90 gradates), to participate in the Zoom event. Our committee worked hard on the agenda, and one of our classmates, Melanie Ruane (Easton, Md.), even scanned 700 photos to be used in a slideshow that would be shown during the call.

At 11 a.m., our event kicked off, and classmates started trickling in, most from the East Coast, but some as far west as California and Washington. One classmate even called in during her work shift to say hello. We started with general greetings, then I gave an update from the School, showing off photos of our not-so new building (some classmates were jealous of our current students’ learning spaces).

We had only planned for 30 minutes of quick hellos from everyone on the call. That 30 minutes soon turned into 90 minutes, but no one was worried. It was great to see everyone’s face (we all agreed that we hadn’t aged in 20 years), learn about what they’ve been up to all this time, see photos of their families, and learn about our professional and personal adventures. Some of us stayed in Maryland, but others found themselves moving across country. Many changed jobs multiple times for newer and better opportunities. Many traveled for work and fun, and what’s best, many of our paths have continued to cross over these years. We’ve remained colleagues, and even better, friends.

Many of us agree that if it had been an in-person activity, the distance and the time would have been a deterrent, but because it was virtual, so many more people were able to join. The photo slide show took us back to our times in and out of Pharmacy Hall, and to the wonderful people we got to spend our four years with. In true Zoom fashion, we ended our call with the opportunity for our classmates to come to our breakout rooms for more conversation and reminiscing, and a promise for more regular virtual get-togethers.

While we could not be together in person, the coronavirus could not keep us apart. The camaraderie built by our class almost 24 years ago during orientation week remains strong, and we all left our virtual meeting feeling excited and invigorated by being able to reconnect. I wish the Class of 2000 continued health, success, and connection. Thanks for making it a great event, and we hope to see more of you at our next milestone reunion!

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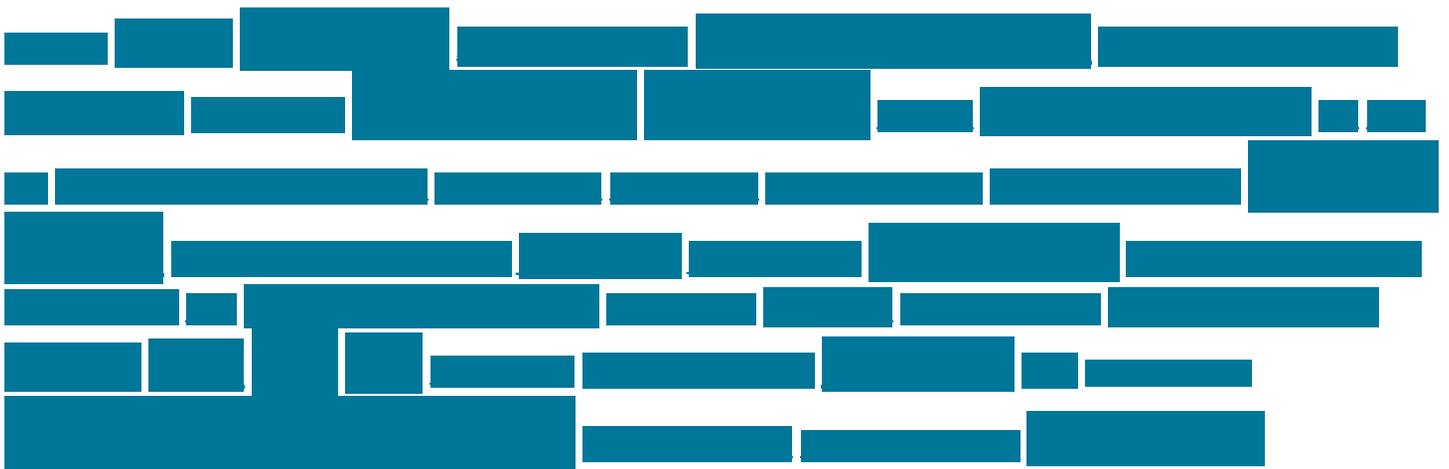


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