



HOSA Salutes Alumnus

Michael Gooch, RN, BSN, CEN, EMTP



Michael Gooch, newly-elected Secretary to the HOSA, Inc. Board of Directors, represents HOSA on many levels since 1993. Michael's story shares how HOSA really makes a difference!

Michael, a 1995 Giles County High School graduate, is a flight nurse for Vanderbilt Medical Center's Life Flight program. At roughly 2,000 flights per year caring for critically injured patients, Michael's job is high pressure and fast paced—definitely

not for the meek, weak or energy-challenged. Michael also works part-time at two additional high stress jobs as an emergency department nurse at Southern Hills Medical Center and an EMT paramedic at Williamson Medical Center.

After hours, Michael continues to pour himself into the service of health care. He teaches continuing education for nursing and paramedic students. He speaks to middle and high school students about health career opportunities, coaches HOSA members preparing for state and local competitions, and is in demand as a judge for the competitions. He is an advisor for a medical explorer post and a volunteer firefighter for the Pulaski Fire Department.

Michael was introduced to the health field through scouting. An Eagle Scout, he joined a medical exploring post in high school, where he was allowed to shadow paramedics on Giles County ambulance runs. (Current regulations no longer allow this practice.) His sophomore year, Michael began taking health sciences courses and joined HOSA. For the next three years, Michael served in state and local HOSA leadership positions. Michael's HOSA Bowl team placed first statewide and among the top ten national teams for two consecutive years. (HOSA Bowl tests individual and team knowledge about health science education, health occupations, HOSA and parliamentary procedures in sequential rounds of elimination.)

Although Michael's initial interest was in practicing medicine, he shifted his focus when exposed to the wide range of duties and practice opportunities in nursing. As a high school sophomore, he observed both an emergency nurse and physician at a HOSA job shadowing day sponsored by Hillside Hospital. Michael was intrigued by the autonomy and range of duties in emergency nursing, and impressed by nursing's fast track educational options. He then set out on a career ladder that secured his dream job of flight nursing within six years of high school graduation. Each rung brought him employment that financed and facilitated his next goal. Michael's progression included:

- Certified Nurse Technician (now CNA), obtained his junior year through the health sciences curriculum (1994).
- First job while still in high school: nurse assistant at an NHC healthcare facility (1994-1997).
- Associate Degree of Nursing (1997) and EMT Paramedic (1999) at Columbia State Community College.
- BSN at Middle Tennessee State University (2001).
- First nursing position in emergency department at Hillside Hospital (1997-1999).
- Emergency nurse at Southern Hills Medical Center (1999 - present).
- Flight nurse appointment at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (2001 - present).

Michael loves his work. "Flight nursing is very skill-oriented, very technical," he said. "It is protocol-driven. I do surgical procedures that only doctors could do 10-15 years ago." He enthusiastically promotes the benefits of nursing to young men at Oakland and Richland High Schools, where he works with HOSA advisors. "There are so many options," he continued. "Nurses can go into informatics, anesthesia, pharmaceuticals, education or be a nurse legalist . . . After three years of nursing, you can be a travel nurse and go anywhere." For a young single with no family responsibilities, Michael said the money is good and the opportunities are boundless.

What is next for Michael? Probably an MSN, he said. Vanderbilt University Medical Center has tuition programs and advanced clinical positions that will enable him to realize his next goal.

Michael was named Outstanding HOSA Alumnus of the Year at the June 2003 National Leadership Conference in Atlanta, a well-deserved honor. Michael is an outstanding role model for HOSA, nursing and health careers in general.

Michael's story is energizing and uplifting. It is even more exciting to contemplate how many more stories like Michael's are out there—or could be. What can we do to nurture these budding healthcare heroes?

First, we can search local schools and career prep organizations – even our own employee ranks—for outstanding individuals like Michael Gooch who are envisioning their futures. We can provide career information, clinical and shadowing experiences, mentoring and tuition assistance. We can provide them jobs with schedules that accommodate their academic responsibilities. We can nurture them, celebrating their mileposts and achievements. We can tend them as part of healthcare's garden. "We must tend them as part of healthcare's garden, or risk losing them to another career choice."