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FASHION ICON DONNA KARAN ADDRESSES GRADUATES OF PHILLIPS BETH ISRAEL SCHOOL OF NURSING

June 3, 2009 -- Call her “Nurse” Donna Karan – an honorary title the internationally renowned fashion designer earned at the June 2nd graduation of the largest class in the history of Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing. Along with 114 students who completed the rigorous associate degree program, Ms. Karan received her honorary diploma from Phillips Beth Israel Co-Chairs Janet Green and Ruth Nerken, who presided over the ceremonies.

Addressing the new inductees into the time-honored nursing profession, Ms. Karan recounted her personal journey -- evolving from the challenges of producing a collection as her mentor was losing the battle with breast cancer while she was in the throes of giving birth to her daughter, Gabby ... through her late husband Stephan’s valiant fight against lung cancer – and now her efforts through the Urban Zen Foundation, to help cancer patients, their loved ones and caregivers at Beth Israel Medical Center, parent institution of Phillips Beth Israel.

“Her life story is immensely touching ... she uttered words from her heart that directly touched the hearts of everyone in attendance,” said Janet Mackin, RN, EdD, Dean of the School. “Donna Karan is more than an honorary nurse, she embodies the very essence of what makes our profession special ... she truly cares!”

As Beth Israel Interim President Harris N. Nagler, MD, acknowledged the work of the faculty, he remarked on the moving tributes expressed by members of the Class of 2009 in their yearbook and congratulated them on their accomplishment.

Valedictorian El Katz received the Seymour J. Phillips Award for highest scholastic achievement. It was presented by the late benefactor’s daughter, Carol P. Green, Beth Israel honorary trustee and member, Committee on Phillips Beth Israel.

Ms. Katz graduated summa cum laude, along with Lisbeth Cassaday, Sienna Aubrey Dela Serna, Petra Stesney Juarez, Rena Margolis and Elizabeth Lee McCracken. Nine were magna cum laude: Emily Dolby-Shields, Maureen H.C. Eisenberg, Amber Harrison, Joyce James, Jennifer Hope Kroll, Lisa Kunka, Jessica Lovett, Jessica B. Stover, Amy Elizabeth Supeck and Dalia Sztulwark.

Receiving cum laude honors were: Adrian N. Balestra, Alan J. Casanova, Maxine Fried, Bracha Goldberg, Jessie C. Gutierrez, Saonjie Fayola Hamilton, Charles B. Jankowski, Aliza Kahn, Meira Kaplan-Purutinsky, Rebecca S. Loza, Heather L. Piccone, Leah Rosner, Laura Anna Russo, Felicia L. Shavers, Serene Adrienne Vicencio-Sy, Devora Warshavchik, Bree Ferrin Wellwood, Winslow Wen Tien Wu and Renee Yudkowitz.

Several graduates received special awards, including the Rose M. Hauer Award of the school’s Alumni Association for outstanding contributions to the school, presented by Dean Emeritus Rose Hauer, RN, MA, to Bryan H. Hogan and Bree Ferrin Wellwood; both also received the Dr. Eileen Melnick Award for team spirit.

Associate Dean Marilyn Parker, RN, EdD, led the recitation of the International Pledge for Nurses, followed by the traditional candle-lighting ceremony that brought the commencement exercise to a conclusion.