Looking up

Vanderbilt pediatrician and amateur astronomer
Donna Hummell, M.D.
Remembering her husband’s smile

BY WAYNE WOOD

Eileen Johnson is a soft-spoken fourth-grade teacher who just lost the love of her life, and she wanted to talk about him.

She knocked at my door one recent afternoon, introduced herself, and said that she had come by the Office of News and Communications and asked to speak with an editor, and somebody directed her to me.

She told me that her husband of 30 years, Kenneth Johnson, ("Kenny" in her words, and memory) died in June, a few weeks after a car wreck in which both he and Mrs. Johnson were injured.

He had severe injuries, she said, but seemed to be recovering at first. He was treated at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, always with Mrs. Johnson by his side, sometimes in a wheelchair herself as she recovered from serious injuries she suffered in the accident. She had hoped for his recovery, but despite the best efforts of his doctors and nurses, Kenny died.

“It was the other driver’s fault,” Mrs. Johnson said quietly. Not with evident anger, but with no effort to gloss over the fact that the world can turn on something as random as a stranger making a bad decision in your vicinity on a neighborhood road.

As she talked about her late husband, and the cruel turn their lives had taken this year, Mrs. Johnson moved between smiling fondly at a favorite memory and tearing up when the reality of the loss came to her again.

She remembered how Kenny had encouraged her career, urged her to continue her education, and had researched master’s degree programs for her. With her years of service to Metro Schools and her education, and with the degree he cheered her on to complete, that

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Open Enrollment is October 1-14
EMPOWER. EDUCATE. ENROLL.

Open Enrollment, the annual opportunity to take charge of your benefits and elect the coverage that fits your needs for the coming year, begins at 8 a.m. on Oct. 1 and ends at 5 p.m. on Oct. 14.

This is the one time each year to review your insurance and spending account coverage and make choices for the upcoming calendar year. The benefit elections you make continue through the plan year (beginning Jan. 1, 2012), and cannot be changed unless you experience a qualifying life event.

Even if you plan to keep the same coverage in 2012, this is an active enrollment, which means you’ll need to log on to the online benefits enrollment tool and make your elections. If you don’t enroll, you will have the following default benefits for 2012:

- Medical Plan—Aetna Standard, employee-only tier (even if you currently waive medical plan coverage)
- Dental Plan—no coverage
- Vision Plan—no coverage
- Accidental Death and Dismemberment—no coverage
- Flexible Spending Accounts—no spending accounts

Note: Your current Short-term Disability election will not change

Important Notes for 2012

Health Plan

- The same health plans will stay in place for 2012: Aetna Standard, Aetna HealthFund and Blue Cross Select.
- Deductibles, copays and out-of-pocket maximums will remain the same.
- We’ve been able to keep premium increases lower than many other employers and continue to have cost based on salary level.
- NEW: Preventive care is expanding and you won’t have a copay for most routine or wellness services.

- Your child(ren) by birth, marriage or adoption—up to age 26—can now be covered by your health plan, regardless of their access to other health insurance coverage.
- Navitus will remain the prescription provider (prescription coverage is included with your health plan, no matter which plan you select). Copayments for tier three (non-preferred) drugs will increase by $5. Specialty drug 90-day prescriptions will no longer be covered, but 30-day supplies may still be obtained through the Vanderbilt Outpatient Pharmacies.

Dental Plan

- NEW: BlueCross BlueShield DentalBlue PPO will replace the CIGNA PPO, resulting in lower premium costs.
- The CIGNA DHMO plan will remain the same, but premiums have increased.

Vision Plan

- NEW: Superior Vision Services replaces VSP as the new plan provider for 2012.
- The plan’s rates are lower than the 2011 vision rates.
- Superior Vision offers a more convenient network of providers, including Vanderbilt Eye Institute, WalMart, Target and LensCrafters.

Short-term Disability

If this is your first time enrolling in Short-term Disability, you’ll need to complete the Hartford’s “proof of insurability” process. This means that the Hartford requires applicants to respond to questions about health and any existing conditions on their online enrollment site. If you already have Short-term Disability insurance through the Hartford, this does not apply to you.

Make an informed decision

How can you ensure you get the coverage you need for 2012?

- Attend the Employee Health Fair at VUMC (all VU employees encouraged to attend) on Thursday, Sept. 8, from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., in the Student Life Center. Benefits staff, as well as plan representatives, will be available to answer questions.
- Mark your calendars for October’s Information Sessions, which will be held in Light Hall on Monday, Oct. 3, and Tuesday, Oct. 4, and at One Hundred Oaks on Monday, Oct. 10.

To visit the HR website, go to http://hr.vanderbilt.edu/oe/

Questions? Contact the Employee Service Center
7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday
(615) 343-7000
Human.resources@vanderbilt.edu
HR Express: 2525 West End Ave, 2nd floor
Looking up

Vanderbilt pediatrician Donna Hummell is one of the most accomplished amateur astronomers in the region. She is intent on passing that knowledge on to others.

BY WAYNE WOOD
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL DUBOIS

There is a list, famous among astronomers, of 110 faint objects in the night sky, first cataloged by French astronomer Charles Messier in the 18th century. A “Messier marathon” is when astronomers begin at dusk and work until dawn, hoping to locate every single one, searching amid the field of stars for each elusive light source, be it a distant galaxy or an ancient supernova.
For a long time I enjoyed the sky but I didn’t know what I was looking at.

Donna Hummell, M.D., knows the night sky so well she has seen every Messier object, participated in four marathons, and once sighted 103 of the 110 in a single night, foiled in the elusive remaining seven objects only by the horizon and the light of the sun.

“Not many have done that, especially by hand,” says Rocky Alvey, program manager of Vanderbilt’s Dyer Observatory, with obvious admiration.

Hummell, associate professor of Pediatrics and Clinical Director of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology, examines children for a living and the cosmos for fun. She is an amateur astronomer who has achieved some notable accomplishments, including serving as vice president of the Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society (BSAS), the organization for Nashvillians who are interested in the cosmos.

Her interest in astronomy as an adult was kindled on a trip with her then-middle-school-age son Hunter to Vanderbilt’s Dyer Observatory to observe an eclipse of the moon.

“That was really my first trip to Dyer, and it was incredible to see the lunar surface in that kind of detail,” she says.

It wasn’t long after that the family, including daughter Rachel and Hummell’s husband, Noel Tulipan, M.D., professor of Neurological Surgery, bought a small telescope and Hummell began scanning the sky for fun.

Later, as her interest grew, she bought a larger telescope that allows her to see more distant and faint objects, but, she is quick to note, amateur astronomy is more about the enjoyment of the sky than the hardware.

“Just using binoculars to look up at the night sky can be eye-opening,” she says.

Hummell says she enjoys the observational aspect of astronomy; her son Hunter was more interested in the physics—so much so, in fact, that he is now a physics major at Washington University in St. Louis. Rachel stuck closer to her mom and dad’s biomedical careers—she is studying to be a veterinarian.

A desire to know the world

“My interest in science started when I was a young girl,” Hummell says. “My grandfather was a self-taught natural scientist. He got me interested in rock collecting. I really enjoyed that a lot.

“My mother and grandmother were avid gardeners and knew a lot about plants. I think that’s how I got interested in science.”

Rather than geology or botany, though, her interests turned toward medicine. She was a chemistry major in college and decided to focus on pediatric immunology for a career.

But choosing a career path in one science doesn’t take away interest from all others. The night sky is big enough for everybody, from poets to physicists to people who just want to know what they’re seeing—and Hummell says she fell into that latter category.

“[For a long time] I enjoyed the sky, but I didn’t know what I was looking at,” she says.

Now, it’s fair to say, she does. In addition to viewing the Messier objects, she is engaged in making her way through the Herschel 400, a list of deep space objects that are even more challenging to find with a telescope.

She has observed a transit of Venus across the sun in Hungary, and on a family visit to Argentina managed to connect with a local astronomy group and was able to observe Eta Carinae, a star system with a surrounding nebula that is a highlight of the skies of the Southern Hemisphere.

When somebody asks her what her favorite sight in the night sky is, she says quietly, “I never get tired of the Orion Nebula”—a brilliant cloud of interstellar dust where stars are still being born.

She says she thinks the wellspring of both astronomy and medicine are a desire to know the world.

“I entered medicine through the science side,” she says. “I’ve always been interested in the way things work. Math and science are tools to understand the world.”

Sharing knowledge

Hummell has high standing in the community of Middle Tennessee amateur astronomers.

“She is very knowledgeable about astronomy, and is willing to share her knowledge and leadership with every-
body,” says local attorney Joe Boyd, a two-term president of the BSAS who has worked with Hummell on projects of the society.

Alvey, the Dyer Observatory program manager, also praises her willingness to help out by serving the astronomy society. “The survival of the BSAS depends on getting people like her involved,” he says.

And while nobody gets involved in something like an astronomy society because of a deep desire to sit through committee meetings, Hummell says she finds value in helping provide the administrative framework to allow the club to meet its goal of service to science and to the community.

She has taught at public star parties hosted by the astronomical society, and is a counselor for Boy Scouts seeking merit badges related to science or astronomy.

“The members have a passion for teaching,” she says. “I consider myself a teacher in the medical field, and I see that a lot in the members of the BSAS.”

Sometimes, she says, she thinks about her grandfather with love and gratitude for interesting her in rock collecting when she was a young girl.

“I believe I studied and majored in chemistry in college because he was a self-taught chemist and metallurgist,” she says. “He died of lung cancer when I was 16 years old. I never got a chance to discuss chemistry seriously with him, and I missed his loving encouragement when the college courses became tougher.

“It is so important to put that spark of interest in a young person,” she says.

She doesn’t add, because she doesn’t have to: because sometimes, if the young person learns to live with an open mind, that spark never goes out.

To find out more about Vanderbilt’s Dyer Observatory, go to http://www.dyer.vanderbilt.edu/

To find out about the Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society, go to http://www.bsasnashville.com/
Cumulative centuries of dedication

The combined Medical Center and University Service Awards will be held Tuesday, Sept. 13, from 3 to 5 p.m. in Langford Auditorium. Those being honored this year are staff with five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55 and 60 (!) years of service. Those with 20 years or longer of service will be recognized at the celebration.

Here’s a list of Medical Center employees who will be honored this year, arranged by years of service and beginning with 10 years. The faculty list follows the staff list.
Monroe McCord
Pat Strobel, 50 years
Nytheet Michaels
Mary Meredith
Robert Merritt
Mynette Michaels
Mary Meredith
June Mills
Janet Morris
Marilyn Moss
Amy Motley
Amanda Mouvery
Candace Murphy
Ann Napier
Kimberly Nelson
Edith Newberry
Quintin Newsom
Myron Norman
Donna Offschanka
Earnestine Olds
Mildred Oroco
Janet Osborne
Michael Overton
Julie Ozier
Sachin Paranjape
John Parker
Teresa Parker
Stacy Parks
Debbie Patterson
Kathleen Patterson
Kathleen Polis
Carol Pope
Catisha Primm
Kevin Ray
Rachel Reagan
James Rediker
Deborah Reid-Jones
Patti Reilly
Michelle Riggs
Michele Riley
LaQuonda Robbins-Weaver
Jackie Robertson
Mary Robertson
Karla Roman
Susan Rose
Blair Sasser
Charles Sharbel
Bridge Sharp
Martha Shone
Patricia Siddon
Novella Simons
Beverly Simms
Jacqueline Simpson
Elizabeth Singleton
Jennifer Skelton
Billie Sledge
Dorothy Smith
Ellen Smogur
Geneine Snell
Laura Stackhouse
Stephanie Staed
Ynette Stinson
Lavonna Stoneburner
Maria Stringer
Greggory Taggard
Elizabeth Taketani
Linda Thayer
Cynthia Vaughn
Susan Wallace
Samuel Warren
Earl Warren
Stefania Weaver
Paula Webb
Wendi Welch
Carla West
Jerry Westbrook
Tina Williams
Yvonne Williams
Sherry Williams
Hollie Wilson
Tanika Wilson
Cathy Wilson
Elizabeth Winkler
Shermel Wright
Jialing Yuan
Mary Conners
Dorina Consacro
Mary Copeland
Connie Crawford-Koonce
Cathy Cunningham
Floremil Dakacano
Dianne Davidson
Dewano Davis
Dasa Desai
Zanette Dodson
Dominic Doyle
Elizabeth Earle
Sharon Etter
Norma Fair
Darla Farris
Patrice Foster
Greta Fowinkle
Denise Gamary
Patricia Gideon
Sadhira Gold
Kimberly Gray-Wright
Malinda Greer
Lisa Grunwald
Diane Gupton
Mark Haddox
Mark Hawkins
Susan Hogan
Deborah Holton
Bichthu Horsley
Lisa Hoy
Cheryl Hulbert
Cynthia Hull
Ann Hurley
Dahl Irvin
Deborah Irvin
Alexandra Jarris
Cynthia Jett
Lisa Johnson
Debbie Johnson
Carol Johnson
Pamela Jones
Yolanda Jones
Lou Kaelin
Zafer Karabulut
Robin Kent
Valerie Kibler
Karen King
Margaret-Ann Koontz
Brenda Lane
Tamara Laslaw
Ana Lewis
Lijing Li
Stella Liles
Sandra Longaberger
Margaret Lovett
Karen Lumpkin
Pamela Lynn
Ian Macdonald
Mary Malone
Gary Malugin
Janet Mandeville
Sandra Martin
Gary McCollum
Loretta McGowan
Kim Meadows
Susan Mills
Johanda Morrow
Patricia Morrow
Germaine Morrow
Susan Moseley
Barbara Nash
Kelly Newman
Janet Nicotera
Michael O’Neal
Shirely Otey
Christina Paris
Tanya Parrish
Nicola Patterson
Monica Parton
Angela Perrin
Judith Phillips
Connie Pollard
Natalie Poole
Tondaleya Rice
Karen Robinson
Ellen Rochelle
Johnetta Roper
Mary Rorrick
Stefanie Rushing
Darin Rutledge
Barbara Sammons
Patsy Shepherd
Debra Shifflett
Clara Shoemake
Donna Sika
Susan Slay
Carolyn Smith
Amy Smith
Cabrini Smith
Rosaline Smith
Donnie Smith
LaTonia Stafford
Michael Stanford
Connie Stenquist
Lucy Steward
Margaret Survant
Leonard Thacklin
Sherry Thomas
La-Sean Trotter
Nancy Walden
Sherri Walker
Sharon Ward
Connie Weaver
Sidney Webb
Randee White
Henrietta White
Pauline Wiggins
Glenda Wilder
Darrell Williams
Peggy Wilson
Teressa Wilson
Glenda Wilson
Roberta Winfrey
Barbara Woodard
Susan Amber
Lita Baldwin
Mary Lee Bates
Dorothy Bennett
Carol Ann Bonner
Brigitta Brannion
Vicki Brinsko
Sandy Brown
Nancy Cardwell
Rose Cassidy
Pamela Chandler
Beverley Cocca
Janet Collett
Leslie Collins
Kelly Collins
Peggy Connolly
Brian Daugherty
LuEllen Davie
David Dispensio
Sonia Donofrio
Kim Dorris
Terri Edwards
Annette Ehrtart
Cynthia Facemire
Sue Floyd
Linda Franklin
Amy Gentry
Rhonda Gibson
Neicy Gilbert
Tim Gillilan
Linda Glovers
Donna Gooch
Lisa Green
Roshana Hatch
DeDee Hollis
Randy James
Audrey Jenkins
Denise Johnson
Teresa Johnson
Diane Johnson
Renata Jones
Ella Jones
Debbie Jones
Dixie Joslyn
Stephen Kelly
Bar Kelly
Susan Kelton
Melanie Kilpatrick
Pat Ligon
Pat Lovin
Angie Lynn
Becky Manes
Lori Martin
Gay Mayo
Connie Murphy
Mary Ellen Niland
Cathie Norton
Jane VanZant
Manik Paul
Manisha Paul
Jerita Payne
Cathy Payne
Asha Phillips
Donna Pinkleton
Joyce Poe
Bharathi Polavarapu
Sharon Pomeroy
Penny Powers
Chris Price
George Anne Raines
Teressa Roberts
George Rocco
Lynda Shaver
Kelly Sims
Jerrie Smith
John Sparks
Janet Stealey
Pam Steele
Jennifer Steinhauser
Greg Swinea
Michael Thompson
Theresa VanZant
Dawna Wagoner
Willa Walden
Brenda Wallace
Mark Watson
Joe West
Frances Williams
Marilyn Young
25 years
Susan Ambrose
Lita Baldwin
Mary Lee Bates
Mary Lee Bates
Dorothy Bennett
Carol Ann Bonner
Brigitta Brannion
Vicki Brinsko
Sandy Brown
Misky Cardwell
Rose Cassidy
Pamela Chandler
Beverley Cocca
Janet Collett
Leslie Collins
Kelly Collins
Peggy Connolly
Brian Daugherty
LuEllen Davie
David Dispensio
Sonia Donofrio
Kim Dorris
Terri Edwards
Annette Ehrtart
Cynthia Facemire
Sue Floyd
Linda Franklin
Amy Gentry
Rhonda Gibson
Neicy Gilbert
Tim Gillilan
Linda Glovers
Donna Gooch
Lisa Green
Roshana Hatch
DeDee Hollis
Randy James
Audrey Jenkins
Denise Johnson
Teresa Johnson
Diane Johnson
Renata Jones
Ella Jones
Debbie Jones
Dixie Joslyn
Stephen Kelly
Bar Kelly
Susan Kelton
Melanie Kilpatrick
Pat Ligon
Pat Lovin
Angie Lynn
Becky Manes
Lori Martin
Gay Mayo
Connie Murphy
Mary Ellen Niland
Cathie Norton
Jane VanZant
Manik Paul
Manisha Paul
Jerita Payne
Cathy Payne
Asha Phillips
Donna Pinkleton
Joyce Poe
Bharathi Polavarapu
Sharon Pomeroy
Penny Powers
Chris Price
George Anne Raines
Teressa Roberts
George Rocco
Lynda Shaver
Kelly Sims
Jerrie Smith
John Sparks
Janet Stealey
Pam Steele
Jennifer Steinhauser
Greg Swinea
Michael Thompson
Theresa VanZant
Dawna Wagoner
Willa Walden
Brenda Wallace
Mark Watson
Joe West
Frances Williams
Marilyn Young
30 years
Dolores Bateman
Lenys Biga
Betsy Bond
Millie Brown
Judy Burger
Charlotte Chaney
Barbara Clinton
Lisa Conyer
George Cotton
Buffy Colborton
Charisse Dililee
Linda Fellwesk
Linda Fenoglio
JoAnn Fields
Charles Floyd
Lori Graves
Carolyn Hall
Shirley Hardin
Lillian Jackson
Mary Johnson
Patricia A. Johnson
Kim Johnson
Shirley Johnson-Crook
Angela Jones
Hazel Jordan
Barbara Krispin
Tadashi Inagami, Ph.D., 45 years

September 2011

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step is within reach. “He wanted me to become a principal,” she said. “He would say, ‘Always be looking to advance.’”

Mrs. Johnson showed me the program that she had designed for her husband’s memorial service. She wrote the text for the inside cover, which included: “Kenneth walked the world with a loving, beautiful smile, and a kind heart each day. Anyone who knew Kenneth would always say to him, ‘Kenneth, your smile can light up a room.’”

The Rev. Marcy Thomas, a chaplain at VUMC, is one of those who knows about that smile:

“I was one of the fortunate ones who will always carry with me the remembrance of that beautiful smile and Kenny’s accompanying great heart,” she said. “As hospital chaplain, it was my privilege to get to know both Kenny and Eileen when they were hospitalized at the same time in 2007. In succeeding years, and most recently after their accident, our friendship deepened.

“I knew Kenny to be curious and smart—a lifelong learner,” she continued. “As several people commented at his memorial service, he was a great encourager, sincerely interested and invested in the lives of his family and friends. And, I have never seen a couple who cared for one another as wholeheartedly as did Kenny and Eileen. I marveled at their devotedness.”

One of the last things Mrs. Johnson told me was she and Kenny had celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary last year. Their 31st would have been this past July 31.

Follow Wayne on Twitter: @woodw

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**House Organ Photo Contest wants pet photos, videos, more**

Enter photos using Flickr and videos via email through Oct. 14

- This is the 30th year that *House Organ* has called on Vanderbilt staff, students, volunteers and faculty to submit photographs to the *House Organ* Photography Contest, the winners of which will be featured, one per month, in the 2012 House Organ Calendar, to be included in the combined December/January issue.

- We are also asking for pictures of your pets. Selected pet pictures will be featured in the February 2012 issue in a “Pets of the Medical Center” feature.

- We also invite the Vanderbilt community to send us links to pet videos that you have posted online, so that we may share those links as part of the February 2012 “Pets” issue.

For the first time this year, we are using the popular online photo sharing site Flickr to collect the photo entries. Video entries will be submitted by sending links to a dedicated Vanderbilt email address.

**Details:**

**Calendar Photography Contest:** Open to all subject matter. Twelve winners will be selected on the basis of interest, technical proficiency and suitability, and printed in the House Organ Calendar.

**Pet Photography Division:** Photographs of pets of Vanderbilt staff, faculty and students are welcomed. Photographic skill matters less than pictures that show the personality of the pets. It’s OK for people to be in the pictures, too. *At the discretion of the judges, pet pictures may be considered for the calendar.*

Those who want to include some information about their pets, such as age, or the fact that she was picked up as a stray, or that he howls when a fire truck goes by, are encouraged to do so in the body of the Flickr email. At the very least, tell us the pet’s name and the names of others in the pictures.

**Pet Videos:** Post your pet video to a site that hosts video, such as YouTube (Do not send the video as an attachment. Post it to a host site.) Then send the URL to the video entry address below, and some of the best videos will be linked to from the *House Organ* website as part of the 2012 Pets issue.

**General rules (please read and follow carefully to avoid the disqualification of your entry):**

**How to enter**

1. Go to the *House Organ* website at http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/ and click on the button to enter, or go directly to the House Organ Photo Contest site on Flickr, per37began@photos.flickr.com Please read over Flickr’s terms of use before entering.
2. Please attach only one photo per email.
3. Your name, department or school, phone number, and email address must be included in the body of the email. Please note, Flickr does not post notification that your images have been received. Entries go into a gallery viewable by the judges.

**How do I send a pet video?** Post your favorite videos of your pet or pets to a video hosting site, such as YouTube, then send an email with the URL link to house.organ.photo@vanderbilt.edu

**Who may enter:** The contest is open to Vanderbilt staff and faculty, volunteers and students of graduate programs, including nursing and medical students. People who work in News and Communications are not eligible for the calendar competition. The photo must have been taken by the person entering it.

**What type of photography is suitable?** Anything—studio portraits, still lifes, landscapes, art photographs, aerial photography, pictures of children, pictures of adults and pictures of pets—have all won in the past.

**What formats are acceptable?** The images must saved as jpg images. Please note that cell phone photos or other low-resolution images won’t work for print.

**What information should be included with each entry?** Your name, department or school, an email address and a phone number should be in the body of the email. With the pet photographs, include the name of the pet and the names of any people in the photograph with the pet.

**When is the deadline?** Midnight on Friday, Oct. 14. No entries received afterward will be considered.

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**watching the wheels continued**