

Sun Devil DNA guided nursing grad to her calling

By Amanda Goodman, ASU News
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Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

Legacy can be a burden or a blessing.

For Elizabeth Wakefield, it's a blessing that shaped her path. When she turns her tassel this December, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in nursing from Arizona State University's [Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation](#), she will continue a long and beloved family tradition.

"I'm actually the fourth-generation woman on my mom's side to graduate with a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University, and that goes all the way back to my great-great-aunt," Wakefield said.

Her dad's side has its fair share of maroon and gold alums as well. Wakefield points out she owes her existence to the university and the nursing program, where her parents' love story began.

"My dad's sister was in nursing school and marching band with my mom. Back then, they used to practice IVs on each other in nursing labs, so they got super close. While they were in the program, she introduced my mom to her brother because she thought they would hit it off, and she was right. They fell in love, and now here I am."

Years later, Wakefield has developed her own love for the university and the program that brought her parents together. A Barrett, The Honors College student, Wakefield made it her mission to get involved. She held leadership roles with the Nursing Students at Barrett organization, the Student Nurses Association of ASU and Arizona, and the American Holistic Nursing Association ASU chapter.

"I've met so many people all over the country because of my involvement in these organizations. It sounds dramatic, but starting as a freshman to put myself out there has quite literally changed my whole life."

Next up, she plans to apply for a nursing job at Phoenix Children's Hospital, where her mom also worked as a nurse, and further her education through the Master of Science in Nursing (nursing education) program.

Below, Wakefield reflects on what she's learned and shares advice for those following a similar path.

Question: What's something that you learned while at ASU in the classroom or otherwise that either surprised you or changed your perspective?

Answer: That perfectionism isn't always everything, and taking care of yourself sometimes has to be the more important thing. Since I'm involved in so many things, I frequently get caught up in trying to make every single event that I'm trying to plan or all the small details perfect, but at the end of the day, people show up, people have fun.

Also, learning how to advocate for myself and others when I don't think things are quite right, or if I see someone not being treated fairly. That has actually helped me on the clinical side of things because I can translate that directly into caring for my patients.

Finally, I've learned through my journey here to not be so hard on myself and to accept the successes, but also some of the learning opportunities for self-improvement and self-reflection.

Q: What's the best piece of advice that you give to those who are still in school, and in particular those who are in the nursing program?

A: It's going to be really hard. There are going to be days that you want to quit, and then there are going to be days that you're on cloud nine! That's just the nature of the program, but it's also the nature of nursing, and nurses have to be resilient. Being able to persevere through nursing school is only going to set you up for success as a nurse.

I know firsthand that that is the hardest thing in the world, especially when you're dealing with life too, because life doesn't just pause when you're in nursing school. But at the end of the day, it is worth it, and it's rewarding to be able to take care of patients in the ways that you're able to touch a life as a nurse. Keep pushing. You've got this.

Q: If somebody gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle with that?

A: My eventual goal is to become a nurse practitioner so that I can open clinics for people who don't have access to clinics and care.

I've done a lot of work with the unhoused, I've done a lot of work with human trafficking victims, with domestic violence victims, with moms who are unable to access prenatal care and people who use substances as well.

The way that the health care system right now treats any of the people that I just mentioned in those groups is not something that I think, as a culture, we should be proud of necessarily. And fostering that change and being a space for those communities to have a place to go and receive the care that they deserve would be my ultimate goal.

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Main image



After graduation, Elizabeth Wakefield plans to pursue a master's degree and career in pediatric nursing. Courtesy photo