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PHILLIPS BETH ISRAEL SCHOOL OF NURSING GRADUATES 100 NEW NURSES

June 6, 2008 -- At a touching and solemn ceremony, class valedictorian and summa cum laude Sarah Roth, 30, led the largest class to graduate from the Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing. The Boro Park resident and mother of three young children, completed an intense two-year associate degree program at the top of her class and was the recipient of The Seymour J. Phillips Award for Highest Scholastic Achievement.

Diplomas were awarded by Phillips Beth Israel Trustee Co-Chairs Janet Green and Ruth Nerken. After 100 seniors had marched up the stage one by one to receive their hard-earned associate in applied science degree in nursing, the face of one student who should have been there flashed on the screen and his classmates stood up and cheered as Dean Janet Mackin, RN, EdD, announced the posthumous honorary degree to Nestor Sulpico, widely acclaimed as "New York's most honest taxi driver" after returning precious black pearl necklaces left by a passenger. Phillips Beth Israel had given Mr. Sulpico a full scholarship to help fulfill his dream to become a nurse; he died of colon cancer in April. Philippine Consul General Cecilia Rebong was on hand to receive the diploma.

Devorah E. Shulman earned the second highest GPA, that won her the Rita Hillman Award for academic excellence coupled with compassionate patient care.

Shujun Cao was the recipient of the Dr. Chaim and Pearl Weiss Award, established by alumna Ruth Merdinger ('51) to honor the memory of her parents who perished in the Holocaust. Ms. Cao is a native of China, and her experience of coming to the US paralleled the challenges Ms. Merdinger faced as a young woman when she was given the opportunity to go to nursing school.

Other award recipients were: Paula Gayle -- David L. Podell Award; Robert Lynch and Christina Milazzo -- Fanny and Charles Karpas Award; Suzette Findley -- Libby P. Marcus Award; Grace Doria and Thomas Seghini III -- Sherman and Paula Raskin Award; Ronne Manook and David Lee -- Rose M. Hauer Award of the Alumni Association of Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing.

Acclaimed stage and film actress Lynn Redgrave, chosen by the students to be commencement speaker, offered encouraging words -- relating how nurses had brought her comfort during her experiences with childbirth and as a cancer survivor.

"The Class of 2008 is a diverse group of students who have completed a rigorous program of nursing education in our traditional day and innovative weekend programs," said Dean Janet Mackin, RN, EdD. "This is the culmination of concentrated learning and preparation for working in a variety of patient care settings, as well as a stepping stone for more advanced nursing degrees."

The majority of the class are second-career individuals who switched to nursing, determined to be part of the solution to the nursing shortage. Ms. Roth taught high school algebra and trigonometry in a Brooklyn yeshiva for 10 years before turning to nursing.

Dean Mackin noted that most of the students held jobs and many raised families and had other responsibilities while in school. About 79 percent of the class have indicated that they plan to seek baccalaureate and master's degrees which will be facilitated by the school's recent articulation agreement with Excelsior College, a nationally recognized leader in nursing education.

"I am confident that graduates of this class are destined to become excellent nurses and some will become the nursing leaders of the future," Dean Mackin averred.

To learn more about Phillips Beth Israel, visit its Web site: www.futurenursebi.org.