



# Tami Dristiliaris

## 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award-Winner



Attorney Tami Dristiliaris holds a nursing degree from Middlesex, as well as a law degree from Suffolk University.

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*- Tami Dristiliaris  
Middlesex Alumna*

### MCC's Distinguished Alumni Award

This award is given each year to a graduate who demonstrates:

- Achievement in their career or other notable achievement
- Exceptional work in service to the community
- Commitment to Middlesex
- Integrity and character

Candidates must hold a degree or certificate from Middlesex Community College.

The award is presented at the MCC commencement ceremony.

#### Past recipients:

- 2009 - Bruce Weeks ('06)
- 2008 - Alan Melkonian ('84)
- 2007 - Jean Connor ('94)
- 2006 - William Chemelli ('75)

**J**uggling the responsibilities of family and a career is challenging enough for most women. Adding a second profession into the mix takes a certain level of determination and motivation, things on which Middlesex alumna Tami Dristiliaris seems to thrive.

A 1983 graduate of MCC's Nursing Program, Dristiliaris is not only a registered nurse, but an attorney with her own private practice. Even as her law practice has grown busier, she still manages to put in 20 hours a week nursing at Lowell General Hospital. "I'm very organized," said Dristiliaris of her taxing schedule. "If I don't have time for something, then I make the time."

Dristiliaris also finds time for Middlesex alumni activities. She is a member of MCC's Alumni Board and a strong supporter of the college. In recognition of her on-going dedication, Dristiliaris has been named the MCC 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award-winner. The award will be presented at the college's commencement ceremony, to be held on Thursday, May 27, at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium.

Dristiliaris' drive to succeed was apparent even at the beginning of her academic career. She started the Nursing Program at MCC while caring for a newborn baby, then gave birth to another child in her third semester. It was concern for her children that compelled her to finish the program. "It wasn't easy, and I stayed up late many nights," she said, "but I knew that in order to earn a good living and to have a good life for my family I had to have a good career."

MCC's Nursing Program was demanding yet rewarding, according to Dristiliaris. "The professors were phenomenal," she said. "I learned so much, especially how to prioritize my nursing care to give patients what they need the most to achieve optimum wellness. I could not have chosen a better nursing program; it was difficult, but I got a superior education."

Part of what made her MCC experience especially rewarding was the camaraderie she shared with her classmates, resulting in many life-long friendships. "It was a good mix of students from all life experiences," said Dristiliaris, "including some who were going into nursing as a second career." She fondly recalls the added incentive to meet with her fellow students every week at a favorite pie shop in Burlington, the desserts sweetening their class discussions.

Dristiliaris believes her Middlesex degree opened the door to many other opportunities, including getting a bachelor's degree in nursing from Atlantic Union College. Later on, after having two more children and working for years as a labor and delivery nurse – at St. Joseph's Hospital in Lowell and then at Lowell General Hospital – Dristiliaris decided to enter law school at Suffolk University.

"I wanted do something in which I could be independent and hang out my own shingle," she said. "If I'm going to work hard, I might as well work for myself." Once again, Dristiliaris plunged into a hectic schedule of work and school, as she continued her hospital work during the day, and attended classes at night. It

took her four years to complete the program, graduating in 2006.

The Dristiliaris law office has a strong focus on family, personal injury and mental-health law. "Experience in nursing helps me relate in a caring and compassionate manner to my clients and their families," she said, "to guide them through the court process, which is often very difficult."

Her concern for those in vulnerable positions and in need of legal representation was recently recognized by the Massachusetts Bar Association. In 2009, it presented Dristiliaris with the Women of Justice Award for her efforts with cases involving domestic violence victims, indigent clients, and pro bono work.

But even as the years led Dristiliaris to other academic institutions, her initial experience at Middlesex instilled loyalty and a strong regard for the college's programs and faculty. She proudly points to her daughter, Alexis, as another successful Middlesex alumna. Initially unsure of what she wanted to do, Alexis graduated with a degree in Biotechnology and is now working at a pharmaceutical company in Cambridge. Dristiliaris credits her daughter's advisors and professors with helping the young woman find direction and pushing her to achieve her goals.

Last year, Dristiliaris returned to MCC, this time as an adjunct faculty member teaching a clinical rotation in the Nursing Program. She praises the students as "smart, hard-working and inquisitive." However, she noted that the profession has changed a lot since her days as an MCC student.

Technology has made the nursing profession much more difficult, requiring a greater knowledge of the machinery used in hospitals, Dristiliaris explained. "The level of responsibility has gotten much greater over the years," she said. "I think the whole burden of patient care now falls on the nurse, which is good in some respects, but not in others, because you want to provide patient care, and not be dealing with technology the whole time you work."

Dristiliaris' caring nature extends beyond the duties of her two careers. She volunteers her time as often as she can, believing it important to give back to the community. From bell ringing for the Salvation Army at Christmas, to helping with food drives and fundraising for the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Dristiliaris helps to serve an endless stream of those in need.

She also dedicates her time to Middlesex alumni events, such as participating in the Annual Fund Phonathon, which solicits donations to the MCC Foundation from alumni. "I like to be involved because I think MCC has come a long way," Dristiliaris said.

"When I went to Middlesex, the Bedford Campus consisted of two buildings at the VA Hospital," she said. "Now it's this beautiful brick campus. MCC provides a great foundation for education and offers so many programs." Dristiliaris is living proof that Middlesex can take you wherever it is you want to go.

*- Amy Magin Wong*