Jana L. Edge grew up in rural southwest Wisconsin and attended the Methodist Hospital School of Nursing in Madison, where she learned the importance of being grounded in the “Art of Nursing”; the understanding of meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient. A beloved nursing instructor began class each day with “Who are you here to serve?” and the response was always, “The patient.” In gaining understanding of the “Art of Nursing”, Jana was able to see that the healing touch of an attentive nurse assisted with pain management, lessened patient anxiety, gave courage and supported the faith that health could be recovered.

Jana received her diploma from Methodist Hospital School of Nursing in 1960 and upon moving to Illinois when her husband, Orlyn, was hired as an associate professor of mathematics at Illinois State Normal University, and completed a bachelors’ degree in Social Work in 1990.

The lessons in “The Art of Nursing” served Jana well as nursing changed many times throughout her career, and the mantra was “go forward” or be “left in the dust”. Jana worked at Mennonite Hospital which later became Advocate BroMenn. She began in labor/delivery, and continued in medical, intensive care, post-surgical nursing management, post anesthesia recovery, and bariatric patient education. Jana pioneered the first parish nurse program south of Chicago.

Nursing taught Jana to always be prepared for the next event and to proceed even when she didn’t have all of the answers or a concrete plan. She had been a member of a search team for finding a Russian sister city in 1988; Vladimir/Canterbury Sister City Association of Bloomington/Normal was formed. In 1992, a request for humanitarian aid from Vladimir was received. Jana was asked to lead this effort but declined because she had no international experience in health care. After receiving additional requests to participate including being asked by the “Russian Campaign with Physicians for Social Responsibility: Development for Democracy,” she finally agreed. The “Art of Nursing” again was applied to the task; she determined exactly what the Russian health care professionals were requesting, she gained local community support, she wrote grants, ordered airplanes and shipping containers, all while being responsible to time lines.

That single event evolved into over 35 exchanges of medical professionals. Some of the outcomes from these exchanges included a new curriculum for a Russian nursing college, city-wide education experiences promoting healthy living, education mentorships and the introduction to physician-nurse cooperation. Russian nurses had an opportunity to see that with continued education and professional behavior their professional position in society could also improve.

In 1993, Jana received McLean County’s “Women of Distinction Award” and the Town of Normal’s “Martin Luther King Human Relations Award” in 2000 celebrating her many efforts. Jana believes that it is extremely important for nurses to have a cross culture experience because it is only then that we can evaluate domestic nursing practice and attempt to understand that of the rest of the world.

Jana is grateful that nursing has given her opportunity to risk by providing her with the tool kit for success. She believes that as nurses step outside their comfort zone they can grow and learn to fly.

The Jana L. Edge Endowed International Transcultural Nursing Scholarship Fund
By establishing the Jana L. Edge Endowed International Transcultural Nursing Scholarship, Jana will assist nursing students to have the opportunity to travel internationally, and thereby see nursing from an outside perspective, and learn to thrive outside their comfort zone.

Each year one successful candidate will be selected for a Jana L. Edge Endowed International Transcultural Nursing Scholarship with the following qualifications:

A. Enrolled in good standing at Illinois State University’s Mennonite College of Nursing, with a minimum of completion of the junior year.

B. Demonstrate a passion for international nursing experience through a brief essay explaining that passion on the award application. Provide a copy of “post” essay or presentation, describing the international experience to donor.

This award is to be used for expenses incurred through participation in international program including tuition, travel, passport, etc.