



A Division of St. John's College

ECHO

Autumn 2021

ST. JOHN'S
COLLEGE
ALUMNI
NEWSLETTER



President's Message

My name is Brandon Leonard, and I am honored to be the new St. John's College (SJC) alumni board president. I do not take this position lightly. Thank you for the opportunity to serve on your behalf throughout the year at various events.

Since this is my first introduction to you, I wanted to tell you a little bit about me. I knew I wanted to become a nurse when I went on a mission trip to Guatemala in 2015. Working in medical clinics made me realize the importance of health care and why it is so necessary. I chose to come to SJC because I wanted to be challenged in my education. I also knew I would be getting the highest-quality nursing education in the area.

I graduated with my BSN in December 2018 and have worked in a few different specialties since then, including med-surg, hospice and neurology. I am starting the family nurse practitioner program at SJC this fall. One day, I hope to become a nurse practitioner in the field of neurology.

One last interesting thing about me is I graduated from Greenville University (Greenville College in my days) and SJC. They have since formed a new partnership for a BSN degree. I am truly lucky both my alma maters are working together to further the education of so many up-and-coming nurses.

Once again it is my honor to serve not only as your alumni board president, but also as a member of the SJC board. If there is ever anything you need from me, please do not hesitate to reach out at brandon.leonard@hshs.org.

Sincerely,
Brandon Leonard, class of '18

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ECHO

is going DIGITAL!

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If you would like to continue getting your copy of ECHO in your mailbox, please email your mailing address to Charlene.Aaron@sjcs.edu or mail this form to: Dr. Charlene Aaron, St. John's College, 729 E. Carpenter St., Springfield, IL 62702



Please keep mailing ECHO to me!

Name: _____

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Chancellor's Message

Dear alumni,

As we start the new academic year, I can't express how happy the faculty, staff and I am to welcome our students back into the classroom! The juniors are so bright eyed and happy to be together, learning face-to-face from our fantastic faculty. As you know, we had to teach online last year, but as we learn more about COVID, have access to the COVID vaccine and wear masks, we are confident we can safely educate the next generation of St. John's College (SJC) nursing students on campus. Also, two of our alumni completed their doctorate degrees in 2021. Dr. Linda Blakley and Dr. Mary Baker will share their stories of academic achievement in this issue.

To increase enrollment and alumni engagement, I began touring central and southern Illinois to meet with alumni, high school administrators, high school students and their parents. SJC alumnus Katie Ward, class of '00, arranged the first tour in Benld. It was eye opening to learn SJC needs more outreach in this area of the state. I shared information about the NP3 high school program and the plans to encourage more NP3 programs within our ministry hospitals in central and southern Illinois. The goal is to set high school students on a pathway to nursing education at St. John's College and then a career at an HSHS hospital.

We have not stopped moving forward due to COVID. Instead, we have faced it head on and continue to innovate. Accreditation work continued throughout this year for the DNP program and the Greenville additional site. Both programs will be available in fall 2022, upon accreditation.

I am proud of the deliberate efforts HSHS is taking to increase diversity, equity and inclusion throughout its ministries. In June, I was part of a panel of system leaders which included Damond Boatwright, the new system CEO and president. The panel spoke on aspects of health equity to provide knowledge, promote understanding of differences and connect social determinants of health into our decision making when we work with patients and students. I spoke about diversity, equity and inclusion in nursing education. The current diversity level in our student body is 13%, but diversity in Springfield is 19.91%. We have work to do to ensure nursing staff represents the community. Literature shows a diverse nursing workforce leads to better health outcomes. It was noted the licensed practical nursing school in Springfield has 60% diversity in their student body. Therefore, SJC is building a pathway from the LPN to BSN program. The pathway will provide access to higher education in nursing and representative care at HSHS St. John's Hospital. There is no LPN-BSN pathway program such as this in Illinois. The SJC program will be available to LPN graduates in fall 2022.

Unfortunately, we are unable to hold the traditional alumni banquet again this year due to COVID-19. Next year, God willing, we will celebrate three special classes, 1970, 1971 and 1972. Anticipate a request for representatives from each of these classes to help plan for this special banquet.

Despite my best efforts to ensure every alumnus receives an issue of the ECHO, I continue to receive many copies marked no forwarding address. Therefore, to be respectful of the environment, save money on postage and eliminate waste, the ECHO will be posted on the college website on the alumni page. For those alumni who want a paper copy, please email me your current address. To access the website, go to sjcs.edu.

Stay safe,

Charlene S. Aaron PhD, RN

Charlene S. Aaron, PhD, RN
Chancellor



Graduates celebrated in outdoor ceremony



Thirty-one students graduated with Bachelor of Science (BSN) degrees in nursing from St. John's College of Nursing on Friday, May 14 at 5 p.m. The ceremony was held outside at the Y Block in downtown Springfield following CDC guidelines for outdoor gatherings.

In addition, three individuals graduated from the RN-BSN online program and eight nurses graduated with a Master of Science (MSN) degree, including the first graduate from the nursing administration leadership program.

"This commencement ceremony signifies our graduates' joyous accomplishments, and we are thrilled to be able to host it in-person in an outdoor setting this year. The time is now for family and friends to celebrate their hard work," said Charlene Aaron, PhD, RN, chancellor of St. John's College. "It is humbling and exhilarating to watch the professional growth of each student's journey. I have the utmost pride in our graduates and wish them a blessed nursing career."

Spring 2021 graduates:

Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Quincy Beyers, BSN, Shelbyville, Ill.
Brytanny Britz, BSN, Flagstaff, Ariz.
Kristianna Bruce, BSN, Champaign, Ill.
Michelle Childers, BSN, Taylorville, Ill.
Courtney Colwell, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Alexis Coonrod, BSN, New Berlin, Ill.
Michelle Costello, BSN, Franklin, Ill.
Daylee Denton, BSN, Pana, Ill.
Emily Entwistle, BSN, Mason City, Ill.
Teresa Esker, BSN, Dieterich, Ill.
Holly Garecht, BSN, Williamsville, Ill.
Jacob Grieme, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Corey Hammer, BSN, Mt. Vernon, Ill.
Talon Harden, BSN, Athens, Ill.
Madison Harrison, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Regi Higley, BSN, Franklin, Tenn.
Cassie Huey, BSN, Jacksonville, Ill.
Elisa Hurtado, BSN, Chicago, Ill.
Audrey Johnson, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Whitney Lacy, BSN, Carlinville, Ill.
Nicholas Lavin, BSN, Taylorville, Ill.
Hailey Lesser, BSN, Nine Mile Falls, Wash.
Melissa MacGruder, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Nicole McDonough, BSN, Lincoln, Ill.
Heather Read, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Katie Schimm, BSN, Fancy Prairie, Ill.
Kristin Stanton, BSN, Taylorville, Ill.
Hannah Walker, BSN, Springfield, Ill.
Chelsea Weitekamp, BSN, Mechanicsburg, Ill.
Addison Wofford, BSN, Springfield, Ill.

RN-BSN Online Program

Kaley Ducane, BSN, Lena, Wisc.
Michelle James, BSN, Green Bay, Wisc.
Amanda Landolt, BSN, Green Bay, Wisc.

Master of Science

Brandynne Allgaier, MSN, Jacksonville, Ill.
Jay Benoit, MSN, Springfield, Ill.
James Jersild, MSN, Foley, Ala.
Rose Katalinich, MSN, Springfield, Ill.
Jessica Kunken, MSN, Greenvew, Ill.
Ashley Skinner, MSN, Pleasant Plains, Ill.
Jessica Vonachen, MSN, Springfield, Ill.
Olivia Waterman, MSN, Palmer, Ill.*

** First graduate of the St. John's College nursing MSN administration leadership program.*

Alumna is commencement speaker



Sally Tamizuddin, RN, (class of 2013) served as commencement speaker at the May 2021 St. John's College of Nursing graduation ceremonies.

Sally gave practical advice and moving accounts of her years of patient-care experiences. She also shared courageous encounters caring for patients with COVID-19 in the intensive care unit (ICU). Sally was the first ICU nurse to receive the COVID-19 vaccination at HSHS St. John's Hospital.

Sally emigrated from England more than 25 years ago. After graduating from St. John's College, she began working in ICU. Sally completed her Master of Science in human counseling with a focus on marriage and family in 2015.

In January 2021, she switched from the ICU critical care float pool to finish up her psychiatric nurse practitioner degree, a reflection of her commitment to life-long learning. Sally has worked as counselor for Family Service Center in Springfield and has been inducted into Sigma Theta Tau for nursing and Sigma Lambda for counseling. Sally has served on the Leland Grove City Council since 2019 and currently works with Habitat for Humanity raising awareness and gathering items for resale.

Sally has twin daughters, Sara and Farah (28), who are both physicians. One practices in New York City and the other in San Diego, Calif.

Accreditation process validates a program



Julie Varns, PhD, RN

Simulation Center Administrator, St. John's College | Class of 1980

Educating nurses using simulation is recognized as being as effective as traditional clinical methods when faculty have the needed skills and resources. To deliver quality simulation-based learning experiences requires knowledge of simulation pedagogy, standards of best practice and a supportive organization. The foundation for an exceptional simulation program includes an overall mission, strategic plan, trained personnel, physical space, state-of-the-art equipment, policies and organizational commitment.

The accreditation process validates a program's commitment to standards and best practices. Much like the process of accreditation of nursing programs, the procedure for simulation

centers entails a self-evaluation and critique of practices that may lead to further simulation center excellence. Accreditation of simulation programs is somewhat new and necessitates a rigorous process of planning, development and evaluation of all aspects of the simulation experience for student nurses.

St. John's College has embarked on the process to become provisionally accredited by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare. With the guidance of a simulation advisory committee, St. John's College Simulation Center will engage in continued self-improvement by expanding innovative simulation modalities, providing continued faculty development in the field and collecting and evaluating feedback. Full accreditation will come two years following provisional accreditation and once outcomes data is collected.





The Motherhouse

Sister Trudy O'Connor, OSF

Class of 1963

It has been a tradition that nursing students spend time at the Motherhouse of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis during their years at the school/college of nursing. The graduates have also spent the better part of their reunion day at the Motherhouse on their 50th anniversary. In recent years, many of the HSHS ministries would send groups of employees to the Motherhouse to meet the Sisters and learn more about the spirit that enlivens our ministries.

With the sociological shifts and the many accompanying changes in the Catholic Church and religious life, there has been a significant reduction in the number of women who feel called to live a vowed community life. Consequently, a number of religious communities are facing the reality of coming to completion of their way of life. This is also happening to the Hospital Sisters, particularly in North America, as we discern the future about our property.

The press release below from May 20, 2021, reflects many long years of work and prayer by the Sisters to discern God's will for us.

Joint Statement from the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis and the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis announced today that they have reached a definitive agreement with the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois in which the diocese will form a new entity that will assume ownership and responsibility in a trust, effective January 2022, for the operations, care and maintenance of the St. Francis Convent property at 4849 LaVerna Road in Springfield. The Hospital Sister's community will continue to live on the property indefinitely through a long-term lease agreement with the newly formed entity.

In addition, the diocese will form a new institute for religious life and intellectual and spiritual formation for teachers of the Catholic faith, parish teams, priests and lay faithful within and beyond the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Formation services will be offered through a combination of the institute's own staff and partnerships with leading Catholic educational and religious institutes from around the country.

"This historic moment for the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis follows years of careful discernment, planning and evaluation of many possible approaches to secure a long-term future for this property," said Sister Maureen O'Connor, OSF, provincial superior of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. "This agreement with the Diocese of Springfield allows us to continue to live on the grounds that have been our home for the past century, while transferring responsibility for its care to an institute that can make productive use of the buildings and grounds for the good of the Church and building up the Catholic faith for generations to come."

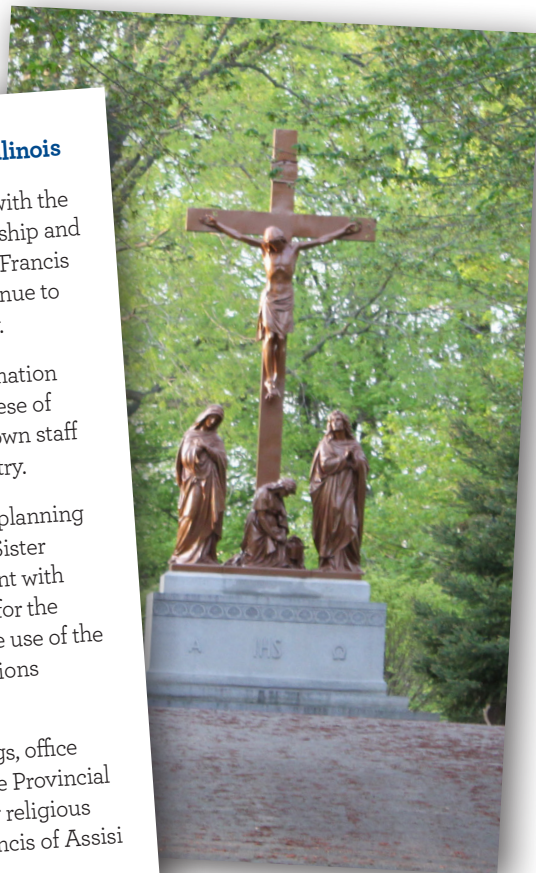
The St. Francis Convent property includes the former Chiara Center, several residential buildings, office space, as well as sacred, consecrated worship spaces. The main residential buildings serve as the Provincial Motherhouse for the Hospital Sisters, while other residential buildings house members of other religious communities. The former Chiara Center is a retreat and conference facility, built around St. Francis of Assisi Church. The agreement is subject to ecclesiastical approval.

The long-term lease agreement will cover essential facilities costs, while the operations of the institute will be funded through a combination of existing educational endowment funds, benefactor support and income from services provided.

"The healing presence of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis has been a great blessing to the people of this diocese and the many other communities where the Sisters have served over the years," said Bishop Thomas John Paprocki. "The formation of this institute allows us to celebrate and honor the sisters' legacy of service while securing a long-term future for the facilities of St. Francis Convent in service of the Church."

"Additional information about the newly formed institute will be forthcoming as the institute and its partnerships are established."

While we Sisters naturally feel the human sadness of our situation, we trust that the colleagues who have worked with us and those who continue to work with us will carry on our mission of compassionate care of the sick and suffering that we began in 1844 and brought to North America in 1875.



Alumni Board Spotlight



Linda Blakley

DNP, MSN, RN | Class of 1982

I am new to the alumni board this year. I graduated from St. John's Hospital School of Nursing in 1982. During school, I began my employment with St. John's Hospital as a student nurse aide on orthopedics. I have now been a St. John's employee for more than 40 years. I started out as a new graduate in orthopedics, and in December 1983, following the birth of my first child, I transferred to labor and delivery. I then transferred to perinatal outreach for the South-Central Illinois Perinatal Center and completed my RN-BSN through McKendree College in 2003. My MSN is Perinatal Clinical Nurse Specialist from St. Louis University, which I received in December 2008. In January of 2009, I started as faculty at St John's College of Nursing. This past May, I finally completed my DNP from St. Francis University in Joliet, Ill.

I have two children. My son, Evan, married his wife, Danielle, in August 2020 (during the pandemic), and they live in Manhattan. My daughter, Michelle, and her husband, Jerry, live in Kirksville, Mo, and have three beautiful children, Oliver (14), Oakley (10) and Hazel (6).

With completing school, I have been able to return to a position on our local Sigma chapter board, as well as join the alumni board. I think my favorite aspect of teaching pre-licensure students is watching them grow as they come to understand what it means to be a nurse, as well as what it means to be a St. John's graduate.

Above: Linda on the evening of her 2021 graduation.

Left: Linda on her graduation day in 1982.



Alumni Lifelong Learning

Mary Baker

DNP, MSN, RN | Class of 1986

Mary Baker, assistant professor at St. John's College, completed her course work in August of 2021 to receive a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the American Sentinel College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Post University. The focus of her DNP degree is on educational leadership. Mary started the journey in October 2018.

Mary's practice-based research focused on active learning and academic performances among prelicensure nursing students. Currently, Mary teaches junior-level students in the medical-surgical nursing I & II courses and plans to continue her research in the area of active learning.

2021 Young Alumna Award — Amanda Simpson



After graduating from St. John's College of Nursing in 2015, Amanda Simpson continued her education to achieve family nurse practitioner and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees from Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville in 2019.

Amanda has published projects and manuscripts and, along with two other colleagues, developed and implemented a DNP program project titled "Utilizing Team-Based Care to Improve Rural Cardiovascular Care." She is certified as a chemotherapy nurse and practices at the Simmons Cancer Institute in Springfield, Ill., with Dr. Aziz Khan.

Amanda and her husband, Dominic, have a one-year-old son, Renzo. In their free time, they enjoy spending time with family and friends, going to the dirt bike track and going on family walks with their dog, Hunter. She is very honored to have been nominated for Young Alumni award.

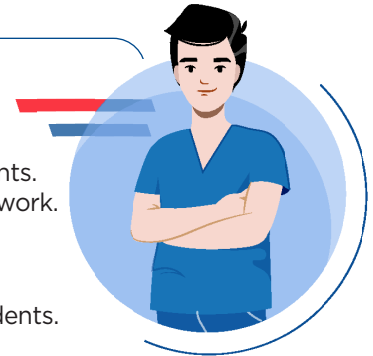
Know a St. John's College graduate who is exceptional?

Of course you do! St. John's College graduates excel!

The St. John's College Alumni Association would love to hear about graduates and their accomplishments. There are two categories: Young Alumnus (graduated within the past 10 years) or Distinguished Alumnus (graduated more than 10 years ago). Each year during Nurses Week, we would love to honor and celebrate a graduate in each of these categories. In order to do that we need to hear from you!

Young Alumnus Criteria for Nomination

- Be a graduate within the past 10 years.
- Excelled early in their professional life and shown potential and/or community achievements. Attained increasingly responsible positions within their organization, business or field of work.
- Received recognition for significant professional contributions, discoveries or creative work through honors, awards and/or media attention.
- Served as an outstanding young role model for current and future St. John's College students.
- Demonstrated ideals that exemplify St. John's College tradition of service, vision and community activism.
- Have demonstrated by his or her actions the importance of education received at St. John's College.
- Continued their educations to make a contribution to their career and the nursing community.



Distinguished Alumnus Criteria for Nomination

- Nominees must be living graduates of St. John's School of Nursing/St. John's College.
- Selection is based on exceptional professional accomplishments, including but not limited to contributions to nursing, community/public service, academic achievement and professional publications.
- Selection is also based on alumni who exemplify the core values of St. John's College: innovation, leadership, competence, life-long learning, justice, mutual respect, stewardship and wholism inclusive of caring, joy and spiritual growth.

How to nominate:

- Submit a brief statement on why you think the nominee should be considered for the award along with a summary of accomplishments.
- Other details or pertinent data that might prove helpful in supporting your nomination include but is not limited to documentation of public/professional recognition, articles or books published by or contributed to by the nominee and synopsis of how the nominee demonstrates the college core values.
- Send all the required information to:
St. John's College of Nursing
c/o Young OR Distinguished Alumni Award
729 East Carpenter Street
Springfield, IL 62702

Or, complete the online form located at sjcs.edu/Alumni and then chose Young Alumnus Award Nomination or Distinguished Alumnus Award Nomination.

Alumni News

Condolences

Mary Pauline Robinson Pierce, '54. Passed October 1, 2019.
Barbara Ostermier Canon, '63. Passed October 29, 2020.
Rose Zupanc Miracle, '42. Passed October 30, 2020.
Mary Fran Ralph, '55. Passed April 24, 2021.
Jean Reichart Staab, '53. Passed May 10, 2021.
Patricia Clark Beard, '58. Passed May 30, 2021.
Betty Schullian L'Esperance, '62. Passed May 31, 2021.
Janet Elaine Krohe Spears, '70. Passed June 15, 2021.
Norma Louis Johnson Converse, '55. Passed June 21, 2021.
Sister Celestine Rivera, OSF, '57. Passed July, 26, 2021.
Mary Catherine McCaskey Grega, '56. Passed August 3, 2021.
Mary Martha "Dee Dee" Amerson (DeClerck), '47. Passed August 5, 2021.
David Lynn Murray, '73. Passed August 7, 2021.
Rosemary Katherine Bushur. Passed August 10, 2021.
Steven Ventress, '18. Passed September 8, 2021.



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