



A Division of
St. John's College

The

ECHO

Spring 2025

ST. JOHN'S
COLLEGE ALUMNI
NEWSLETTER



Greetings fellow St. John's alumni,

As ever, time keeps ticking along. The major change in my life is that I retired from St. John's College in May 2024 and have returned as adjunct faculty. I began my nursing journey with HSHS as what we then called a student nurse aide in January of 1980. Yes, if you do the math, that is 44 years with HSHS.

Another year has passed since I last wrote a letter for The ECHO. A couple of topics I would like you to consider are joining the alumni board as well as nominating a fellow alumna for the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Please take time to visit the website. The nomination forms for distinguished alumni are on the website. There is also a place to submit information/updates for communication and items to be included in future issues of The ECHO.

I know many of you are on Facebook. On the St. John's Hospital School of Nursing Grads private group, a post keeps reoccurring about alumni wear. These posts are getting through despite the best efforts of the page administrators. If you would like to purchase alumni wear, in a manner that will support the school, please go to the website and click Online Store under the Alumni tab.

The next alumni banquet weekend will be, as it traditionally is, the first Saturday in October, Saturday, Oct. 4. The class of 1975 is this year's 50-year class.

I would like to take a moment to recognize Sister Gertrude "Trudy" O'Connor, class of 1963 and a current alumni board member, for being highlighted in Catholic Times, Magazine of the Diocese in Springfield in Illinois. I included the link to the article: dio.org/catholic-times/sister-trudy-talks-about-her-life-long-love-of-nursing.

I hope that this year is being good to you. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the banquet in October.

Respectfully,
Linda Blakley, class of 1982
Alumni Board President

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Update your contact Information

To update your physical address, phone number
and/or email address, please visit:

hshs.org/StJohnsCollege/Contact/Update-Contact-Information

*Alumni & Friends
Banquet*

See page 2 for details.

A Message from the Chancellor



Greetings St. John's College alumni,

I hope this message finds you well. I am delighted to share this edition of The Echo, which will now be published annually in April both online and in print.

It was a joy to see so many of you at our Alumni and Friends Banquet in October 2024. The evening was truly memorable as we honored the 50-year Class of 1974 with a heartfelt pinning ceremony. Looking ahead to this October, we will celebrate the class of 1975 in the same way and recognize all alumni in attendance who graduated in 1973 or earlier.

Our 2025 banquet holds special significance as it falls exactly 139 years to the day when the founding Sisters and the "Priest-Director of the Community, Father Louis Hinssen, began a nurse training school for the Sisters on the Feast of St. Francis on October 4, 1886, at St. John's Hospital in Springfield, Illinois."* This milestone serves as a powerful reminder of our rich history and enduring commitment to nursing education.

The college has experienced significant growth over the past year, with our fall 2024 admission cohort welcoming 100 students. Moving forward, we plan to admit pre-RN licensure BSN students in both the fall and spring semesters. Additionally, our RN-BSN program continues to thrive, and we are excited to welcome 30 new students in fall 2025. This program has seen remarkable engagement, particularly among our HSHS nurse colleagues, with more than 85% of the incoming cohort currently employed as HSHS nurses.

We are grateful for the ongoing support and involvement of our alumni. Your dedication and contributions help shape the future of nursing education at St. John's College.

Warm regards,
Dr. Traci Krause
Chancellor

* (McDougall, A. (1986). 1886-1986: One Hundred Years of Excellence in Nursing Education: The History of St. John's Hospital School of Nursing, St. John's Hospital School of Nursing).

You are cordially invited to the
2025 St. John's College Alumni Association

Alumni & Friends Banquet

Saturday, October 4

Dinner | 6 p.m.

Northfield Inn, Suites and Conference Center
3280 Northfield Drive | Springfield, IL

To RSVP, go to
sjcs.edu/alumniabanquet



Due to rising prices and the need to balance some of the costs associated with the banquet, this year's cost is \$60 per person for all attendees.

To attend this year's Alumni and Friends Banquet, please complete the registration form online at sjcs.edu/alumniabanquet.

You will receive a confirmation email and can pay by check made out to:

St. John's College of Nursing
729 E. Carpenter St.
Springfield, IL 62702

Please ensure payment is received by Sept. 20, 2025. After that date, payment will be accepted at the banquet.

Please direct any questions via email to sjcsalumni@outlook.com.

A Message from the Dean of Academic Affairs



Hello alumni,

I am excited to begin a recap of the 2024-25 school year by acknowledging our first class of LPN-BSN students to graduate from our program, Jamie Gochanour and Marissa Hasquin. For 2024, we had 37 undergraduate students achieve a 95% first-time pass rate on the NCLEX, exceeding the national average of 91%. We wish our 2024 and 2025 graduates well in the profession as they represent St. John's College.

Congratulations to our May 2024 MSN-FNP graduates who achieved an 87.5% pass rate for the FNP certification. From this class of eight students, several were undergraduate alumni, which is a testament to the St. John's College program.

The faculty at St. John's College have been extremely busy with the implementation of the new undergraduate curriculum and the new RN-BSN curriculum. In fall, we admitted a record number of LPN-BSN students, as well as a large cohort of undergraduate students. Our updated RN-BSN curriculum also allowed us to enroll a record number of RN-BSN students; many of them are colleagues from the HSHS system. The faculty are also preparing for our ACEN site visit in August 2025.

We sent nearly 40 undergraduate and graduate students and faculty to the 3rd Annual Kenniebrew-McNeese Health Equity Conference, From Awareness to Action. This program is hosted by HSHS St. John's Hospital, SIU School of Medicine and Memorial Health. Our students in community health have had expanded opportunities with Mission Outreach; curricular sessions on surgical nursing, biomedical engineering and maternal health; and having been treated to stories from the Sisters who have participated in health mission trips. Our senior students and faculty showed their St. John's College spirit with t-shirts while participating in Student Nurse Political Action Day sponsored by ANA-IL. Our students participated in Research Day hosted by St. John's Hospital through poster presentations of their EBP projects from their leadership course.

Congratulations to Assistant Professor Judy Skelton, MSN, RNC-OB, CLC, who is a recipient of the FY25 IBHE Nurse Educator Fellowship Award. This yearly grant promotes the retention of highly qualified nursing faculty.

As we look to the future at the college, the graduate committee has assessed the current program and will be making curricular changes to focus on a master's degree in nursing leadership and education and focusing on a post-master's doctorate. Through continued work on the strategic plan, we are working diligently to increase student satisfaction, increase and maintain NCLEX pass rates and to create a pipeline from St. John's College to HSHS hospitals.

Thank you for your continued support as I serve the mission and vision of St. John's College of Nursing.

Elaine Hardy, Ph.D., RN
Dean of Academic Affairs

Supporting your alma mater

Each year, your generous financial support allows the next generation of nurses to receive scholarships to off-set the cost of their education. These scholarships play a critical role in our mission to educate and prepare more nurses to serve our communities with compassion and excellence. If you would like to support the college through designated scholarship or undesignated college funds, please visit hshs.org/StJohnsCollege/give or email our philanthropy specialist at natalie.donaldson@hshs.org.

We are truly grateful for your continued support and commitment to nursing education.

St. John's College of Nursing graduates

*Class of
December 2024*



**December 2024
Baccalaureate
Graduates**

Branden Alkhatib
Laura Anderson
Rachelle Bates

Brooke Buchele
Claire Burnham
Jessica DeBerry
Soleil Fegett
Addison Miller
Christal Moriconi

Tess Saathoff
Carsen Sims
Dynastie Smith-Reed
Drew Thomas
Taylor West
Briana Wilson Tucker

**December 2024
RN-BSN Graduates**

Zenobia Fennell
Ma Lin
Kevin Schaubert

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Scholarship Luncheon

Friday, Oct. 3, 2025 | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Dove Conference Center at Prairie Heart Institute
619 E. Mason Street | Springfield, Ill.

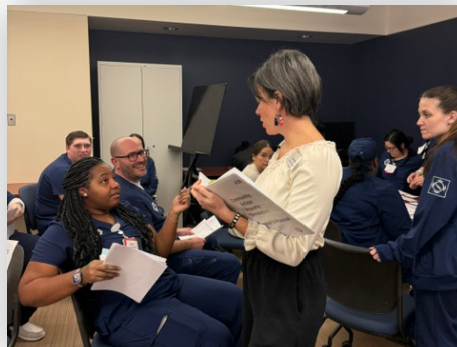
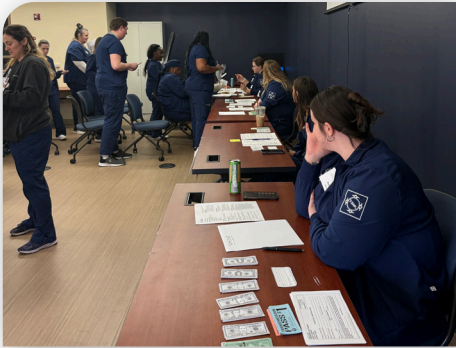
Current college donors are invited to join us the day before the Alumni and Friends Banquet for the St. John's College Annual Scholarship Luncheon. This special event offers a meaningful opportunity to connect with fellow donors and see firsthand the difference your generosity makes in the lives of our students.

We look forward to sharing lunch and conversation with you.

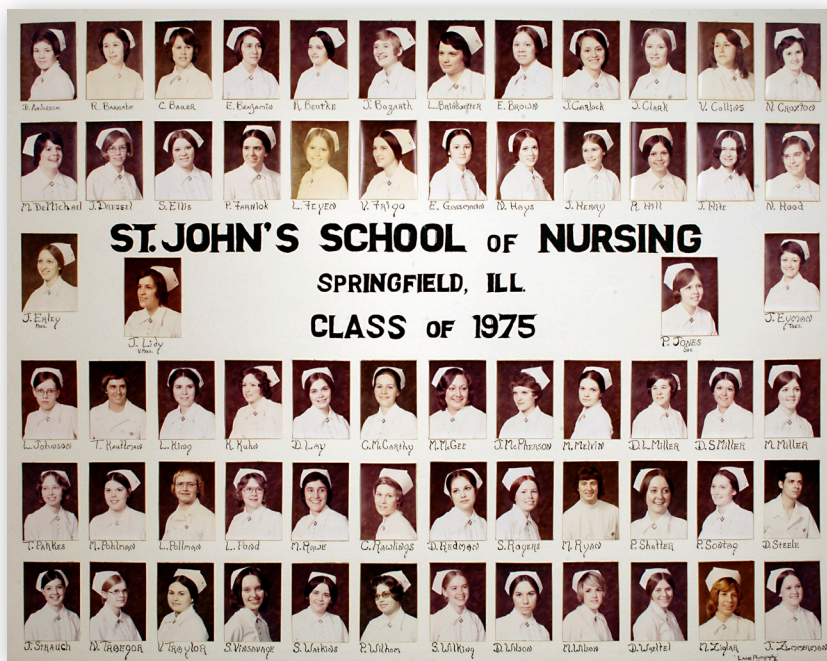
College Happenings

In January, more than 70 students took part in a poverty simulation held on campus and organized by the faculty of our community and mental health courses. The simulation allowed students to step into the roles of individuals and families living at or below the poverty line in the United States, navigating the daily challenges and systemic barriers faced by many. Faculty, staff and community volunteers supported the event by assuming

roles within government agencies and community organizations — key institutions with which individuals in poverty must regularly engage. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the simulation as a powerful and eye-opening learning experience that deepened their understanding of poverty's impact on daily life.



Class of 1975: *What was happening 50 years ago?*



This year marks the 50th anniversary of our 1975 St. John's School of Nursing graduates — a remarkable milestone worth celebrating!

Back in 1975:

- White skirts (some with hemlines just above the knee) were standard nurse attire.
- All in the Family was still a primetime favorite, while Good Morning America and Wheel of Fortune were just making their debut.
- At the movies, Jaws was drawing crowds, and a ticket cost just \$2.03.
- President Gerald R. Ford announced the end of the Vietnam War.
- The Coast Guard Academy welcomed its first female cadets.
- We tuned in for the first nationally televised women's college basketball game.
- Pet Rocks were the rage.
- Taco Bell was a go-to spot for a quick bite.
- "Love Will Keep Us Together" by Captain and Tennille topped the music charts.
- Gasoline was just 53 cents a gallon.
- The first Ford F-150 rolled off the line.
- Popular baby names were Jennifer and Michael.

**What a time it was,
and what an incredible
journey it's been for
the class of 1975!**



2025 Distinguished Alumnus Award



We are proud to announce that Sister Gertrude "Trudy" O'Connor, class of 1963, has been named the 2025 Distinguished Alumna.

Sister Trudy's remarkable nursing career spans over 50 years, during which she served in a wide range of roles, including medical-surgical charge nurse, operating room nurse, clinical nurse specialist, nurse educator and manager of geriatric nursing. Many of us fondly remember her time as a dedicated faculty member at St. John's School of Nursing. Among her many accolades, she received the AORN Outstanding Achievement in Perioperative Clinical Nurse Education Award while working in her "dream job" in surgery.

Her academic accomplishments are equally impressive, earning degrees from Marillac College, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Rush University in Chicago.

Sister Trudy is the embodiment of a servant leader — humble, compassionate and ever-committed to helping others succeed. Whether in the classroom, at the bedside or behind the scenes, she has quietly influenced generations of nurses with her wisdom, integrity and deep sense of purpose. She continues to serve her religious community and the alumni board with the same spirit of generosity and grace.

When told of her nomination, she humbly responded, "But I haven't done anything of consequence." We beg to differ. Sister Trudy has made a lasting impact through every student she mentored, every patient she cared for and every life she touched. She is, in every way, a shining example of what it means to be a St. John's nurse — committed to excellence, rooted in compassion and guided by faith.

Please join us in celebrating Sister Trudy O'Connor, our 2025 Distinguished Alumna!

College News

Colleague Changes

This year, our nurse practitioner clinical coordinator resigned. Given the small size of the program, clinical coordination for the graduate programs is now being led by Dr. Cynthia Bednarchik, a dedicated faculty member.

We were also pleased to welcome back two recently retired faculty members, professors Mary Barnes and Linda Blakley, who have returned to serve as adjunct instructors — an invaluable addition to our team.

Additionally, we bid farewell to long-time faculty member Dr. Mary Baker, who has accepted a teaching position closer to her home in Arizona. Dr. Baker played a pivotal role in the revision of the RN-BSN curriculum, and we are deeply grateful for her many years of service and contributions to the college.

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

Of course you do!

St. John's College graduates excel!

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) and Distinguished Alumnus (graduated more than 10 years ago). Each year during Nurses Week, we would love to honor and celebrate a graduate in each category. In order to do that, we need to hear from you!

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 are not limited to, documentation of public/professional recognition, articles or books published 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 Alumnus Award
729 E. Carpenter St., Springfield, IL 62702

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

New Strategic Plan

Over the past year, the college partnered with an external consulting firm to support the development of a new strategic plan, aligned with the broader HSHS Strategic Plan.

The updated plan outlines six key objectives:

- Enhancing academic excellence,
- Strengthening community engagement and partnerships
- Fostering human potential
- Optimizing operational efficiency and innovation
- Refreshing our brand
- Increasing philanthropic support



A festive parade poster with a yellow background and red and blue bunting at the top. It features a Ferris wheel and a red tent in the background. The text reads: "WALK WITH SJC AT THE STATE FAIR" in a brown font, "PARADE!" in large white letters on a blue banner, "THURSDAY AUGUST 7TH | 5:30 PM" in white on a red background, and "SAVE THE DATE! MORE INFO TO COME" in white on a red background. Below this, a white box contains the text: "St. John's College will once again participate in the Illinois State Fair Parade on Thursday, August 7 at 5:30 p.m. We invite you to join us for this enjoyable event as we proudly represent the college. It's always a great time, and we especially love seeing our alumni at the fair!"

WALK WITH SJC AT THE STATE FAIR

PARADE!

THURSDAY AUGUST 7TH | 5:30 PM

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In Memoriam

Condolences

Rosemary Lemanski, '48. Passed June 15, 2022.
Doris Woods, '45. Passed Aug. 7, 2024.
Sister Anne Carlino, '61. Passed Sept. 4, 2024.
Marcia Ann Strow, '79. Passed Oct. 13, 2024.
Mary Louise Catteau, St. John's College secretary for 50 years. Passed Nov. 21, 2024.
Sister Mary Louise Durbin, '62. Passed Dec. 25, 2024.
Carolyn M. (Esker) Carmichal, '58. Passed Feb. 14, 2025.



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