



# Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Newsletter Fall 2023

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni,

Fall has arrived! The leaves changing in the Pittsburgh area are colorful and as beautiful as the leaves in the northern states. Fall also brings a very special occasion for us. We're excited to share this special edition of the newsletter to celebrate Sister Carolyn Schallenberger's 70th Anniversary as a Sister of Mercy. The stories and tributes shared by alumni for this issue are very touching...read more inside!

Besides planning to surprise Sister Carolyn, the alumni board members have been busy preparing for a great 2023-2024 year. I look forward to our Alumni Memorial Mass and Brunch on November 18, with the Angels of Allegheny conducting a service. We will be celebrating the lives of our Mercy nurses who passed since the start of Covid, as this is our first mass in person.

We are also resuming education sessions and will keep you posted on how you can participate. Do not forget if you are thinking of advancing your education, we have scholarships available. See the scholarship section for guidelines.

To increase membership in the Alumni Association, we're offering a Buy-One-Get-One dues opportunity. Send in your dues and the name of a classmate for us to add to our mailing list. Bring a classmate to one of our events. We hope to see you at the Memorial Mass and Brunch on November 18 and the Spring Fling on April 13, 2024, which will be a party for Sister Carolyn!

We have added flexibility at the alumni board meetings. You are welcome to be part of our board either in person or virtually; no matter where you live, you can be part of the alumni board! Please let us know if you are interested, we welcome you to email [mercyalums@gmail.com](mailto:mercyalums@gmail.com).

No matter where you live now, you have enjoyed the great city of Pittsburgh as well as the school of nursing and all they have to offer, Pittsburgh is home to all Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni. Once a Pittsburgher, always one...

As a fellow alumni and colleague Colleen Harkins Yaksick '80 once said, "Health Happiness and Peace to Yinzers!" I could not have said it any better.

Regards,

**Marian Kowatch Bindas '83**

## CELEBRATING SISTER CAROLYN

ON HER 70TH ANNIVERSARY  
AS A SISTER OF MERCY!



Heartfelt and loving "Congratulations!" to you, Sister Carolyn, on this milestone in your life. We are blessed to have you in OUR lives!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Pittsburgh

[www.mhsnpittsburghalumni.com](http://www.mhsnpittsburghalumni.com)

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## UPMC Mercy Hospital School of Nursing UPDATE



**By Angela Balistreri '96**  
**Director, School of Nursing**

Hello Alumni Friends.

I am happy to report that the School of Nursing is larger than ever. This past year in response to the national nursing shortage, Mercy School of Nursing has doubled the enrollment. We now offer two start dates per academic year as well as a full-time and part-time program.

We have reinstated the tuition forgiveness program in which students can get their tuition paid for in exchange for a 3-year work commitment to UPMC after graduation. We have expanded onto the 11th floor, as well as into an old nursing unit in the hospital for clinical lab space.

In August we graduated a small class of 19 students. We had a beautiful ceremony at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Oakland. I am proud to say we are maintaining high NCLEX pass rates, with our most recent being 88%.

MERCY HOSPITAL SCHOOL OF NURSING

ORDER TODAY!

HANDCRAFTED ORNAMENT

**\$22**

WENDELL AUGUST FORGE  
[wendellaugust.com/mercyhospitalchoolofnursing](http://wendellaugust.com/mercyhospitalchoolofnursing)

## MEMORIAL MASS AND BRUNCH

November 18, 2023 - 10:30 a.m.  
Mercy Hospital Chapel

Free-will offering for the Brunch

RSVP by October 31  
Email: [mercyalums@gmail.com](mailto:mercyalums@gmail.com)  
Phone: Mary Ann at 412-337-7386

# Mercy Angels ~ Jan. 1, 2020 to Aug. 31, 2023

*The Memorial Mass on November 18th will be our first one since Covid. We will offer our prayers for alumni who have passed away since 2020 and alumni from previous years that family members recently wrote in to let us know.*



Grad Yr	Name	Date of death	Grad Yr	Name	Date of death
1941	Irene V. Yagmin	10/12/20	1958	Caroline Ryall Baierlein	07/11/05
1942	Elizabeth Baxter O'Neill	08/15/20	1958	LaDonna Weber May	12/12/19
1945	Alverda Mullen Squires	05/29/17	1958	Janet Schigel Pallotti	01/09/20
1946	Leona Colarusso Bodner	02/17/23	1958	Paulette Marie Tarnek Smith	06/12/20
1946	Margaret Prascak Tracy	05/05/17	1958	Marie M Wudarsky Brant	05/29/18
1946	Mary Patricia Murray Carlson	04/15/21	1959	Mary Ann Kocan	06/12/22
1946	Dolores Marie Miller Winter	08/20/21	1959	Mary Helen Newman Winek	08/26/23
1946	Captain Norma Gardill Boyette	03/27/20	1959	Elaine Morgan Weithorn	09/05/20
1947	Helen L. Gallena	06/19/23	1959	Patricia Lee Weinert	08/05/20
1947	Elizabeth Ann Schupay Morrison	04/27/20	1959	Nancy McCartan Walko	10/08/20
1947	Elizabeth Jelenski Stanislaw	07/20/16	1959	Jennie Louise Sontag Wincek	03/05/21
1948	Elaine Newcomb Martin	06/29/23	1959	Maryanne Fermanis Young	02/16/20
1948	Alina Wolski Check	07/20/21	1959	Carolyn Ryall Baierlein	02/xx/19
1949	Aileen Boyle Lyons	02/15/23	1959	Ethel Marie Tittnich	06/02/20
1949	Helen Ventura Meehan	01/01/23	1959	Mary Lou DaquilaSchollaert	06/20/20
1949	Loretta Reiling Holtz	04/30/21	1960	Mary P. O'Donnell Koval	08/05/23
1950	Leona M. Fitsch Stout	08/09/23	1960	Mary Frances Bauman	11/27/21
1950	Vera Ivanac Harkness	02/07/22	1960	Carole Komara Arendas	09/06/21
1950	D. Deanne Tornblom Gelis	02/08/21	1960	Mary A. Kossler Collins	07/04/20
1950	Rosemary Rooney Hazel	05/05/21	1961	Sandra Finkbeiner Gearhart	11/04/19
1950	Margaret Berus Eckenrode	05/16/20	1961	Marilyn M. Pegher Macurak	04/xx/20
1951	Mildred Fencak Fedor	12/25/21	1963	Virginia Bable Madine	01/21/20
1951	Joan Kelly DeRosa	01/09/22	1963	Rose Golden Terrill	03/xx/16
1952	Joan Reich McKessick	02/19/23	1963	Barbara Jean Yonker	01/24/21
1952	Joanne Schillinger Schaub	12/26/21	1965	Elizabeth Green DeBose	04/xx/20
1952	Geraldine Martier Toncini	06/08/21	1965	Beatrice Haines Sisson Kersten	06/21/20
1953	Dolores Schreiner Iannacchione	01/12/22	1966	Nita Reichle Liptak	05/23/21
1953	Constance Novak	05/04/23	1966	Mary Cathleen Pusateri McGovern	05/18/19
1953	Margaret Sughrue Ruff	08/07/23	1966	Patricia Hagan Murray	11/14/22
1953	Rita Ann Imgrund Vislosky	04/12/21	1967	Nancy Lolli	01/23/21
1953	Mary Ann Wydo Gilch	07/11/21	1967	Michaele Kielman Eder	1/02/19
1953	Mary J. Allen Kusbit	03/30/20	1969	Marjorie McCall Stright	03/24/22
1954	Patricia McBride Gallagher	09/20/20	1969	Jennifer L.M. Kula Salatka	04/15/21
1954	Elsa J. Ciocchi	10/29/20	1972	Mary Lou Bonner Anderson	04/12/23
1955	Cecilia Dacko Pysh	01/24/21	1972	Rita Plovock Petrus	12/05/21
1955	Francis Davis	11/xx/15	1974	Kathleen A. Zaichuk Coppula	12/26/19
1957	Margaret Neuhard Bridge	03/03/23	1975	Deborah Faynor King	08/12/22
1957	Frances Konieczny Schneider	02/28/22	1982	Sherri L. Frick Freiters	04/27/20
1957	Florence L. Tian	05/22/22	1984	Melissa Sasso	06/05/23
1957	Geraldine F. Schottenheimer Woodward	12/15/19	1985	Renee Venturella	02/10/22
1957	Mary Elise Brown Richardson	09/28/20	1990	Ruth Gandy Sanford	10/17/20
1958	Patricia McHugh Fastrich	04/18/22	1992	Charles A. Roskos	08/15/22
1958	Helen Marie Bzinak Gibbons	05/20/23	2008	Eileen Mura Hertweck	02/27/21
1958	Patricia McHugh Fastrich	04/18/22	2021	Courtney N. Belcher	07/24/22
1958	Carol A. Saccamano	04/28/22			

*If you hear sad news of a classmate passing away,  
please let us know so we can send a card of condolence to the family.*

# TRIBUTE TO SISTER CAROLYN

*We begin our tribute to Sister Carolyn by combining a 2013 article from the Sisters of Mercy "Jubilee!" magazine with excerpts from recent articles by Sandra Tolliver and the UPMC Media Relations Dept.*

"Come follow me," are Jesus's words borrowed and repeated by Sister Carolyn Schallenberger as she makes her rounds at Pittsburgh's UPMC Mercy Hospital as Nursing Support Coordinator. Upon entering her 60th jubilee year, she said, "I work to bring God's love to others through prayer, listening, laughing, and assisting others. To me 'Mercy is kindness in the face of misery.' Each person carries a heavy load I hope to help lighten." Now in 2023, as Sister Carolyn enters her 70th year of active ministry, barely skipping a beat, let us as Mercy Alumni reflect on her dedication to her religious and nursing vocations and the lives Sister has touched with God's love...including ours.

During the 1950s when sister-nurses worked 7-day, 70-hour weeks, a young Carolyn, a parishioner of St. Timothy Parish, Smithton, Pa., was completing high school. "I enrolled in the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing on Sept. 1, 1953, talked with Sister Mary Louise Nash on Oct. 3, and was in the Sisters of Mercy by Nov. 20," she said. When we introduce ourselves at Alumni Board meetings -- our name and the year we graduated -- Sister Carolyn whimsically adds that she is

"Mercy Hospital School of Nursing's most famous drop-out." But indeed, MHSN is where Sister's story begins.

Her father once told of being a young patient at Mercy Hospital, known as a place for "mending bodies, saving souls," under the care of the Sisters of Mercy. Upon meeting them, Carolyn said, "I was influenced by their prayerfulness in the hospital chapel, their friendliness and professionalism at all times."

She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Mount Mercy College (now Carlow University), and a master's degree from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. In 1959 she was the hospital's nurse manager in pediatrics, moved on to nursing instructor, and Associate Director followed by 23 years as Director at the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing.

Next, she was hospital vice president of patient services and chief nursing officer. Sister is now in her 64th year at Mercy Hospital and her 18th year as Nursing Support Coordinator, providing support to the hospital's new hires.

She still visits with patients and their family members when someone asks, especially Catholics seeking spiritual support. "Sometimes it's a matter of listening," she says. "Most of the time it's just being supportive. You don't have to say much of anything. You say, 'I'm so sorry. My name is Sister Carolyn and I've been here a long time. I can understand a little of

what you feel. Tell me what's bothering you.' When we talk about our problems, we often solve them while we're talking about them."

Five years ago Sister Carolyn broke her back, and although she can walk, she rides a scooter at work. Every month it is decorated by employees from different departments who vie for the chance to do so, choosing themes to match the holidays or seasons...for her August birthday, balloons and a cake. "We have a lot of fun with it," she says. "It lightens everybody's spirit and makes for teamwork." "My favorite years have been the development and support of women and men into professionals who are compassionate, caring, and competent. The best part of my job is meeting young people and encouraging them in what they do, finding out what they'd like to do and seeing that they fit in their jobs," she says. "I've done it all — nurse's aide, teacher, director, manager, vice president and now new hire support," she says. She strives to ensure that "people are compassionate as well as competent. Competency is important, but compassion is equally important. You either have it or you don't. I tell new hires, 'If you don't like it here, don't stay. We don't have time for unhappy people.' We're all better for supporting each other and knowing each other." And to those exploring religious life, Sister Carolyn encourages, "Come and give yourself to God through service to His people for the most wonderful life possible. God cannot be outdone in generosity."

■ Hello! I just love the idea of honoring Sister Carolyn! I always felt a sense of comfort with Sr. Carolyn. As a young almost-18-year-old fresh out of high school, I was very anxious and unsure of myself in this new endeavor I had chosen to pursue. From the very first week, I found a soothing presence whenever Sr. Carolyn interacted with our incoming freshman class. She was the Director of the School of Nursing at the time. She always ac-

knowledged that there would be difficulties and challenges, but instilled in me confidence to not give up, always put the patient first, and base all that you do from a point of faith. ALL things I strive to continue to live by to this day, both in my personal and professional life! She was such a presence of peace, confidence, and joy - I remember her as always smiling! I love hearing that she is still continuing to serve, bringing her special sense

of comfort to all she encounters. I love seeing pictures of her in the newsletters and when she was featured on the local news a couple of years back. I have shared her story, pictures, and my personal experiences on more than one occasion with my husband and daughters. Congratulations on your 70th year serving the Lord as a Sister of Mercy! You are a true example of glorifying the Lord with your life of service to all who have been

# TRIBUTE TO SISTER CAROLYN CONTINUED

blessed by your presence and kindness! You left an impression on me that I hold close to my heart as one of a dear memory of my time at Mercy! God Bless You! Sincerely,

**Mary Jo Klimkowski Lender BSN, RN  
Class of 1987**

■ Sr. Carolyn and I graduated from the same high school South Huntingdon, in Ruffsdale PA. I remember going with Sr. Carolyn to speak to the Future Nurses of America. We talked about Mercy's School of Nursing. I was a nursing school freshman. I know we recruited 1 student! Our high school was very small.

My 2 younger sisters Veronica and Christine also attended Mercy.

Sr. Carolyn has always been very supportive of me through my nursing career at Mercy which will be 50 years! I started nursing school August 1973.

**Eve Rozinsky Medich  
Class of 1975**

■ Four of us student nurses worked in an isolation unit. A large room with partitions for about 8 Pediatric patients - each partition had a hook with a yellow isolation gown hanging from it for each patient. We had to go in and out of each partition, change gowns each time and try to feed lunch to sick, little toddlers!!! The room was a MESS!!! Our instructor Sister Carolyn came in and told us all to go to lunch. When we came back, miraculously, Sister had all the patients bathed and settled down for a nap!!! The whole room was PERFECT!

**Nancy Freyer Wolford, Class of 1964**

■ I am a graduate from Nov. '87. I had 32 good years as a "Mercy Grad." I have fond memories of Mercy. My desire was to be a nurse or a kindergarten teacher, and I see I picked the right career, even though I didn't get to



go back to school until later in life. Please give my sincere regards to Sister Carolyn, who was such a help to me when my brother was so ill back then. I will always say...Thank You, Lord...for going back to school all those years ago. God Bless My Mercy School of Nursing.

Sincerely,  
**Dorothy P. Smoyer  
Class of Nov. '87**

■ The thing I remember the most about Sr. Carolyn was how accessible she was. You could always stop into her office to see her, or you could talk to her in the hallway, because she was always walking the corridors of the SON to check on everyone and everything!

**Michael Neft  
Class of 1983**



What a wonderful way to celebrate Sr. Carolyn! After graduation I spent my whole career at Mercy Hospital. Loved 2 East Ward and my 24-bed ward and 12-bed sunporch. What a way to further your education. I left in 1960 and married George, the brother of my roommate Patty Mesher. He was a Pgh school teacher. Married 61 years - have a daughter and son, and now 4 grandchildren & 5 great-grandchildren. Returned to Mercy in 1973 for 27 years in the Mercy Health Center. What a wonderful, satisfying return to Mercy. Met some of the best minds in medicine and a pleasure to work with them. Loved it all, I loved my Mercy cap and wore it to the day I retired in 2002. In 2012, I had both knees replaced at Mercy, and Sr. Carolyn visited q day - post-op care, P.T. instructions, and concern...she stated, "Once a nurse, always a nurse" - still the caring and wonderful person she has always been. Congrats to her on her 70 years as an RSM RN!

**Barbara Vasiloff-Mesher  
Class of 1957**

# TRIBUTE TO SISTER CAROLYN CONTINUED

■ I am writing to express my gratitude to Sr. Carolyn Schallenberger. She is such a wonderful person who saw the potential in myself in becoming a Registered Nurse. Back in December of 1995 when things did not work out for me in one nursing school, she allowed me to attend the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing. Here I was able to finish my nursing education to become a Registered Nurse in 1997. I was so heartbroken at the results of the previous nursing school, only to be welcomed and nurtured at the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing.

After the completion of my education at Mercy, I attended the University of Pittsburgh and obtained my BSN in 1998. Followed by a School Nurse Certification from the University of Pittsburgh in 2005 and then a Master of Health Education from Penn State University in 2015.

I have had a rewarding career for 26 years and 18 of those as a School Nurse in Pennsylvania. If it were not for Sr. Carolyn, I would not be where I am today. I often think of how thankful I am for the opportunity she gave me. Thank you, Sr. Carolyn, for being the dynamic, caring, thoughtful person that you are. You are a very special person in this world, and I am grateful to have met you and to have experienced your many blessings!

Thank you from my heart,  
**Michelle Rubenstein Ulishney**  
**Class of 1997**

■ This is an "endearing" Thanksgiving story. This took place in November 1991 during my freshman year at Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Pittsburgh. I was a nearly 40-year-old non-traditional student. My husband had lost his job. We had 5 school-age children, and we were on food stamps and barely made it financially from day to day.

The Nursing School had a food drive, and all the students were asked to bring in a donation of food for the Thanks-

giving Charity Drive.

I went to my mailbox and found a note from Sr. Carolyn Schallenberger (the Director of The School of Nursing) wanting to see me in her office. I went in, not knowing what this could be about. Sister Carolyn brought me to her office and quickly shut the door and showed me all the collected food from the Thanksgiving Drive. Sister said, "See all this food, this is for you and your family." "Now after classes are dismissed, I want you to bring your car to the front of the school."

I did as Sr. Carolyn instructed me. She then helped me carry all the bags of food to my car! I was speechless as we were so in need of food.

To this day, nearly 32 years later, that was my most precious Thanksgiving memory. I have shared this story with many people, especially during the holidays.

After my graduation from Mercy in 1992, I worked nearly 27 years as the RN night charge nurse for the Sisters of St. Francis in their Mt. Alvernia Convent Infirmary. I have shared this story to the dear Sisters countless times. It always brought a smile to their faces during the holidays. It continues to this day to be an "endearing" story of love and giving.

**Lauren Hendricks Shearer, RN**  
**Class of 1992**

■ One of my fondest memories of Sister Carolyn is as our Peds Instructor – she probably wasn't a whole lot older than we were when she was known as Sister Carmel and wore the traditional Mercy habit in white. She was so calm, confident, knowledgeable, and kind. I remember Holy Saturday in 1967 when I was scheduled for "clinical experience" from 11 pm to 7 am Easter morning. Anybody remember the Peds "Diarrhea Ward"...the toddlers with GI viruses? You would no sooner get finished changing diapers around the room and then it was time to start

all over again. And in between, giving the kids their antibiotic meds in a red syrup suspension that they usually spit out all over you...it was a busy night. I finally emerged to the Nurses Station at 7 am on Easter Sunday morning to report off, and Sister Carolyn was there... and said "thank you" for working the holiday. She gave me a paperback copy of "Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care." I remember being very surprised and happy to receive a gift from Sister!

I got married soon after graduation, with our 3 children born over the next few years, and I used that Dr. Spock book a whole lot! This was 30 years before we had "Dr. Google"!

These days, it's a joy and my privilege to see Sister Carolyn at the Alumni board meetings. Congrats and best wishes on your 70th Jubilee!

**Dorothy Kornosky Mayernik**  
**Class of 1967**

■ Two memorable Sister Carolyn stories to share:

At a MHSN Open House, I shared my anxiety about returning to school in my 30s with the school's director. Sister Carolyn's response was simple and yet powerful. "You may be twice as old as some students, but you are also twice as smart." That one sentence gave me all the confidence I needed.

Fast forward 15 years, and I met with Sister Carolyn, now VP of Patient Services. I informed her of an opportunity I was considering outside of Mercy. Once again, her response was simple yet powerful, "We'll leave the light on."

Seven years later, my position at UPMC expanded, when Mercy Hospital was renamed UPMC Mercy in 2008 and I saw that, indeed, the light was left on.

**Deborah Ehland Pesanka, MS, BSN, RN - Operational Excellence, UPMC**  
**Class of 1989**



# TRIBUTE TO SISTER CAROLYN CONTINUED



■ I remember running in the 2 Great Races in the mid-eighties and coming up the Blvd. of the Allies “hill” (it seemed like a steep climb). There was Sr. Carolyn along with Sr. Margaret Mary cheering on the runners! What a lift that gave me personally. Sr. Carolyn always radiated happiness and joy as I went through the 2-year program.

I also remember having a meal with Sr. Carolyn and Sr. Margaret Mary in 2004 in the hospital cafeteria while my dad was an inpatient cancer patient. That was such a wonderful experience for me during a very sad time.

I am so glad she is still working in the hospital, dealing with new hires, and continues to bring happiness and joy to staff and patients.

Sincerely,

**Karen Koza Marshall**  
Class of 1972

■ I have known Sr. Carolyn since 1957 – 60 years! Longer than many of you have been alive. I roomed with her sister Judy Schallenberger Fisher on the 6th floor, which was next to the T.V. room/”Smoker!”

Sister’s religious name was Sister Carmel, but we called her “Carmel.” She visited us often, in her white habit. She wore glasses and her eyes sparkled. We have stayed in touch through the years! I consider her a friend and a role model. Congratulations on 70 years as a Sister of Mercy!

**Joyce Wig Farley**  
Class of 1960

■ I remember going through Mercy School of Nursing in 1986-1988 and Sr. Carolyn welcomed me with open arms! My Mom, Margie Thompson 1984, worked with Mercy Hospital for

years and is an Alum.

Going through school was challenging, and Sr. Carolyn was always there, for snacks, finances, and kind encouraging words. She would meet everyone in the lounge and smile “good morning.” What an awesome woman!!! She is truly the HEART of Mercy! After graduation I went to the VAMC in Oakland...wow what a difference! After 2 years I was back at Mercy. Guess who greeted me? Yep, Sister Carolyn saying, “Welcome Home!” I love you, Sister Carolyn! Thanks for the 30 + years (at Mercy for me) of enlightening me with your beautiful spirit!

God Bless!

**Mary Jo (Jodi) Thompson, RN**  
Class of 1988

■ Sr. Carolyn practiced the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. When I was an instructor for the School of Nursing, she allowed me to take off for my dear aunt's death, even though aunts were not considered “immediate family” under hospital policy.

**Anna Jane Bayer**  
Class of 1964

■ Dear sweet Sr. Carolyn was our Pediatric instructor at the time I went to Mercy Hospital School of Nursing. She was always a ball of energy as well as knowledge. Many years passed when a friend was visiting Pittsburgh (another Mercy alum) who looked me up & asked to go to the hospital to reminisce. Sr. Carolyn was so gracious & welcoming. She showed us all around to our old nurses’ residence building as well as all the new structures that have been built since we graduated. We couldn't help but notice how on every floor we went to, staff as well as patients greeted her warmly. She is a treasure for sure.

**Janice Bell Elder**  
Class of 1970

■ As I recall, Sr. Carolyn was a clinical instructor in Pediatrics. Known then as Sr. Carmel, she was the most approachable, least threatening of teachers, with

mentoring qualities beyond words!

After graduation, hospital experience, and further education, my career choice was nursing education, spanning from LPN programs to university BSN colleges. During these years, Sr. Carmel continued to guide me in all ways regarding students. Good, kind people stay with us forever.

Thank you, Sr. Carolyn  
and Happy Anniversary!

**Mary Ellen Wachter Myers**  
Class of 1964

■ Thank you, Sr. Carolyn, for guiding me through nursing school. And beginning my formation to become Catholic. I came into the church on May 18, 1984. Following her support, my initial mentors in the hospital were Catholic too while working at Greenville Hospital. And I continue to work for the Diocese of Fort Worth, after starting there in 1991, after moving to Fort Worth, TX.

Thank you!

**Nancy Vaughn Eder**  
Class of 1978

■ My husband met Sr. Carolyn in 2001 during the 1st of frequent hospitalizations...she always visited and prayed for him! Of course, from the first meeting, Billy had the greatest respect and regard for Sister!

Since then, if ever I was impatient or used a 4-letter word, he would admonish me by threatening, “I’m telling Sr. Caroline” (he never did get her name straight, but I got the message)!!! She has always been a great example, and now my hubby is in Heaven and I still feel Sister's influence.

**Madelyn Jordan Keller**  
Class of 1973

# TRIBUTE TO SISTER CAROLYN CONTINUED

■ Sister Carolyn was a kind and caring presence during my years as a student at Mercy. After graduation, we kept in touch. I earned a BSN from Duquesne University and Sister Carolyn gave me the opportunity to teach at Mercy's School of Nursing, which reinforced my love of both teaching and nursing. I remember Sister telling me: "the first year, you learn; the second year, you teach; the third year, you contribute." I give that excellent advice to every new faculty member I know!

Sister Carolyn may not remember this, but she also gave me my first chance to cantor at mass; I continue to sing in my church choir and serve as cantor in my parish to this day. After earning a master's degree from Duquesne, I decided to continue my education at the University of Utah. I was nervous to leave Pittsburgh and Sister Carolyn came to the rescue. She copied out the words to the hymn "Be Not Afraid" and I sang it (constantly) as I drove west. I am so blessed to have had Sister Carolyn as a mentor in my life.

**Patti (formerly Mraz) Ludwig-Beymer**  
Class of 1973



■ Hope I'm not too late, I just came across this photo and thought I would share. I have fond memories of Sister Carolyn supporting us as students... she was in administration as she had just transitioned from directing the SON. She remained a support/mentor as I began my career in Mercy's ED!

I thank her for her encouragement and mentorship.

**Kristin Burnham Dumblosky**  
Class of 2000

■ I am a former Director of the School of Nursing. Sr. Carolyn was a wonderful leader and friend!

**Joanne Sperry**

■ Dear Sister Carolyn, I write this congratulatory note to celebrate you on your 70th year Jubilee. I want to personally thank you for all your dedication to the nursing profession at Mercy Hospital School of Nursing. You fostered perfection, dedication to the patients' wellbeing, and helped so many

novice nurses become superstars in our profession.

You accepted me into the program when I was forced out of a university nursing program due to affirmative action! I was devastated, yet you gave me a chance in a crowded acceptance group, to become a Mercy Nurse. I can't thank you enough for taking a chance on me. I excelled in my career, becoming a Director of Emergency Services for over 30 yrs. I was always a charge nurse coming up and I owe it to my training at MHSN!

Congratulations and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

**Gretchen Van Balen Szafaryn**  
Class of 1977



Sister Carolyn with Board members Linda Dunlop Fowler, Dorothy Kornosky Mayernik, Theresa Brown Krzemien, and Mary Ann Curley McDonough. Sister's scooter is decorated to celebrate her August birthday for the whole month.

**Sister Carolyn ~ We ❤️ You!**



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



■ Congrats to our former president **Corie Greece Schultheis '07** on her recent promotion to Assistant Director at UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing. Corie started her professional career at The Children's Institute as a staff nurse in the inpatient Pediatric Rehabilitation department. Then she took a position as a staff nurse at Excella Health where she worked on the pediatric unit, and in adult med surge. She then took a position as a professional staff nurse at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Throughout her time at the bedside, Corie mentored new nurses and students. She developed a love for nursing education and was given an opportunity to teach by Dr. Angela Balistreri.

From there she moved into a full-time nursing instructor role at Mercy School of Nursing, and UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing. In her 10 years with the UPMC Schools of Nursing, she has been in a variety of roles teaching didactic and clinical, moving into an Advanced Educator role, Manager of Student Success and Engagement, and as of May 2023 the Assistant Director of UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing. Corie said she is grateful for Dr. Balistreri providing her with the opportunity to begin a career in nursing education that has led to a rewarding career for her.



■ **Autumn Shingler-Nace '04** was featured in the article, "From Baby Nurse to Operations Leader," in the recent University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing Magazine, Pitt Nurse. Following graduation from Mercy, Autumn started her career at UPMC Children's Hospital in the pediatric ICU. Nursing leadership positions followed, at Carlisle Regional Medical Center as house supervisor, then UPMC Passavant as an assistant manager. Autumn pursued her DNP at Pitt in health systems executive leadership while serving as a clinical director in various units at Cooper University Health Care in New Jersey at Children's Regional Hospital, overseeing the pediatric ICU, step-down unit, and neonatal ICU. Next stop was Jefferson Health in southern New Jersey as assistant vice president of nursing. In 2021 she was promoted to vice president of operations. In the article, Autumn recalls being reluctant to apply for that position..."I want to take care of patients!" A colleague and mentor's words convinced her to apply: "As a leader, you get to influence all the patients, the process, and the nurses and can create a different level of impact on health care and patient experience." In the article, Autumn reflects, "I got here because I have people who believe in me and mentors who told me I could do this even when I doubted myself." Now, she says, she is paying it forward and mentoring the next generation of leaders.

To read the entire article, Google "Pitt nurse magazine" and click on issue, Summer 2023.

## SCHOLARSHIP CORNER



The Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association awards scholarships to any alumni member who is pursuing an advanced degree in nursing. Applicant must be a dues-paying member of the Alumni Association for at least two years, be enrolled in a BSN, MSN, DNP, or PhD program, and submit a letter of need and a copy of enrolled courses as well as the cost of said courses.

To Apply, please submit letter of need and course info to:

Michele Buraczewski, RN, MSN  
MHSN Alumni Association  
PO Box 53123  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Email:  
buraczewskim@upmc.edu

*It warms my heart to see the success of our graduates.*

— SCS

# ALUMNI NEWS & MEMORIES:

■ Graduated in 1953 from Mercy Hospital. I'm still active & helping out when I can. Have 5 children, 11 grandchildren and 6 great-children—a handful. Hi to all. I was 91 in August 2023.

**Shirley Swab Lawson**  
Class of 1953

■ Professional Update:

1968 - Staff nurse VA Hospital, Seal Beach, CA (not all patients have been beloved but these guys were).

1977-78 Office nurse

1981-82 St. Joseph Hospital, Las Vegas,  
1989-1997 Arizona State U., Tempe  
Retired

Personal Update: Lucky in Love - best husband; four children, lots of grand and great grandchildren

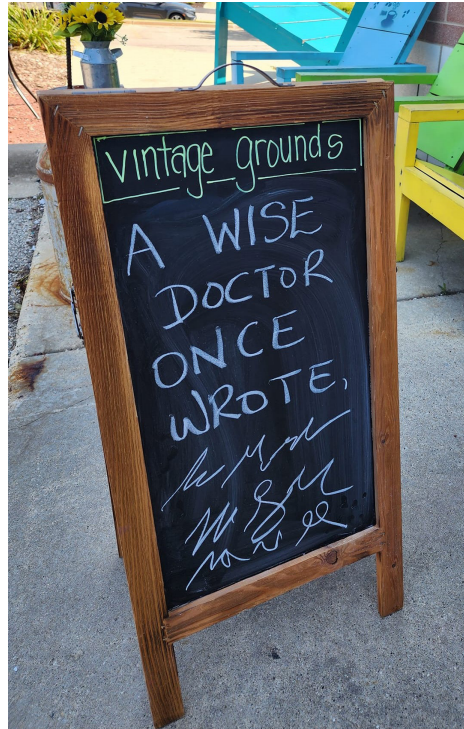
My husband and I love traveling and have visited all but four states in our beloved country, hope to visit the 4 before the end.

When living in Vegas we were fortunate to see lots of entertainers - Elvis 3 times!!!

I am also lucky to have a Mercy Yearbook printed in 1961. This book has been a great source for refreshing memories: photos of the sisters in their habits, residents & interns (smiling!), cafeteria servers, elevator operators, our own priest Father Bosco who said Mass every morning and counseled us, when needed, with great gentleness.

All of the nursing students lived in the nursing dorm - and were not allowed to be married. We could go out in the evening but had to sign in and out and there were bed checks to make sure we were IN. Dire consequences if we were not IN. One classmate was shown the door after failing to be IN.

Speaking of habits: The nun's residence was on the top floor. All of us put our uniforms down a laundry chute to be laundered. One time one of our ornery students opened the chute and found a habit had caught on something. Of



course she rescued it, wore it, and blessed us all.

The Mercy nuns were lovely, stern, nurses that demanded our best. Sister Vincent was my favorite. I left my assigned post with crippling menstrual pain. Went to my room, took off my uniform, left it on the floor and literally crawled into bed. Sister Vincent came to check on me, picked up my uniform, pulled the window shade, covered me with the blanket...saying nothing and left me to rest and heal.

It is easy to go on and on!

**Linda Ghene McNeil - Mercy Grad 1963 (One of the "old" ones!)**

■ Spent the first 18 years of my career as an Oncology nurse in various roles of staff nurse, clinician and unit director. Launched the Lung Cancer Screening Program for AHN. Spent 5 years as a unit director in Acute Rehabilitation. Became a nursing instructor at UPMC Mercy School of Nursing in 2018 and am currently the Manager of Student Success and Engagement at UPMC Mercy School of Nursing.

**Jennifer Simmen Stolar**  
Class of 1996

■ I am thrilled to be part of the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing class of 1973! After graduation, I worked at II Mercy on 5 North, 12 Tower, and ICU, divorced, went to school at Duquesne, and taught at Mercy. Then I moved to Utah, earned a PhD in nursing from the University of Utah, married Albert (Bert) Beymer, and became Patti Ludwig-Beymer. Bert and I have lived in the Chicago suburbs for 38 years. Our daughter, Theresa, her husband Jim, and their two sons live nearby. I'm blessed to spend every Tuesday with my grandsons Bennett (almost 3) and Logan (1 ½).

I've worked in healthcare organizations and schools of nursing in four states. My most recent hospital position was as Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at a 385-bed community hospital, where we achieved Magnet® designation three times. Currently I'm a full-time associate professor at Purdue University Northwest. I love to write and I've published 60 articles, 30 book chapters, and one book. I have not yet written the great American novel, but I continue to hope!

I was inducted as a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing in 2006, primarily for my efforts to improve health equity for underserved populations. Perhaps my greatest honor was providing the graduation address for Mercy graduates in 1996. The opportunity allowed me to reflect on the strong foundation I received at Mercy. I raise a glass to former and future Mercy graduates and especially to the class of 1973!

**Patti Ludwig-Beymer**  
Class of 1973



## ALUMNI NEWS &amp; MEMORIES CONTINUED

## Only A Select Few Will Understand How Important This Picture Is



■ I am a Senior Corporate Improvement Specialist for the Clinical Improvement Department at the Wolff Center at UPMC. Since January 2007, I have served as a resource for quality, safety, and process improvement in many system-wide initiatives. I assess operations and processes in a comprehensive analysis and lead interprofessional teams in the development of clinical outcomes that drive quality patient outcomes, optimize patient experiences, and reduce resource utilization.

I began my career as a critical care nurse in the cardiothoracic ICU at UPMC Mercy Hospital. With an early interest in improvement of care delivery, I moved into a newly-created cardiac outcomes management role in the Mercy Heart Institute. This new work drove my passion for quality and patient safety. I currently enjoy teaching quality courses across UPMC, including the UPMC Schools of Nursing.

I graduated from the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in 1989 and completed my Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Carlow University. This was followed a few years later with a Master of Science in Management and Technology from Carlow.

**Deborah Ehland Pesanka**  
Class of 1989

We are working to update every class address list - important in the event of reunions and class specific news. PLEASE if you are aware of classmates or workmates that are not in the database, ask them to forward their name and address to:

mercyalums@gmail.com

MHSN Alumni Association

PO BOX 53123, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

■ I am a 1962 MHSN graduate. I have 3 degrees from the University of Pittsburgh (BSN, MPH, and DrPH). But, I consider, and have always considered myself, a “Mercy Nurse.” I worked at MERCY HOSPITAL for a total of 30 years (staff nurse on the “old” 2 East Private, Supervisor in the Recovery Room, Coordinator of Nursing Quality/Risk Mgmt., and Director of Inservice Education/House Supervisors). My MERCY experiences led me to Harmarville/HealthSouth, sitting for my Nursing Home licensure and several long-term care facilities. I retired from my full-time position (Nursing Home Administrator) after 51 years of nursing practice. I continue to have a legal nurse consulting practice focused on the standard of care for long term care litigation. I now have the time to give to the Alumni Assn. I have been President/Secretary/Board of Directors member in the past. Since 2013, I have had the responsibility to send all deceased alumni-families a sympathy card from our alumni, letting the family know we have not forgotten. Each November, we plan a Memorial Mass and brunch to specifically remember our alumni who died in the past year. My support to the Alumni Assn. is the reflection of my appreciation for the education I received, and for the opportunities both the nursing profession and Mercy Hospital have provided me over the past 5 decades.

**Linda Dunlop Fowler**  
Class of 1962

## SPRING FLING 2024

April 13, 2024 is not far off! It's the Spring Fling in which we will be celebrating and honoring Sr. Carolyn for her 70th year as a Sister of Mercy. She probably has the longest tenure of all Mercy employees!

Mark your calendar for the 11 a.m. Mass followed by Luncheon. See old friends and meet new ones. Cost for Luncheon is \$35.

### Spring Fling Reservation

April 13, 2024 - 11 a.m. Mass with Luncheon following. Join the celebration and fun to fete Sister Carolyn.

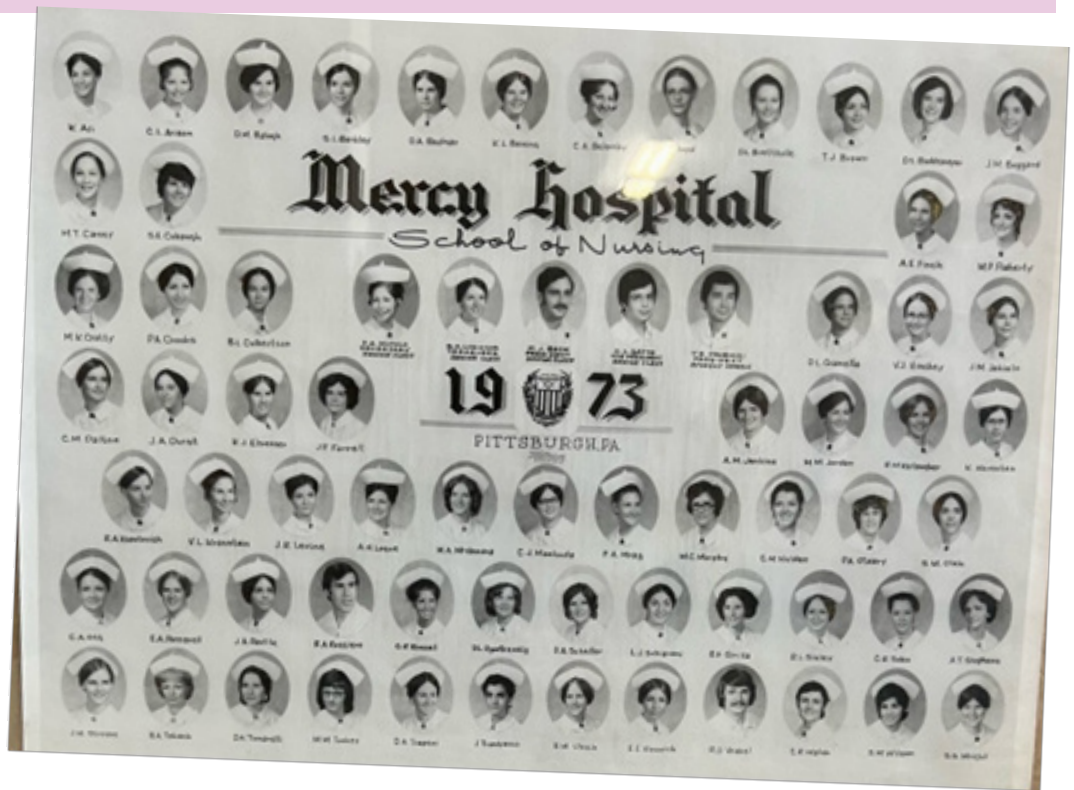
RSVP before April 1, 2024 via [mercyalums@gmail.com](mailto:mercyalums@gmail.com) or mail the tear off. Excited to see you!

Mail form to:  
MHSN Alumni Association  
P.O. Box 53123  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

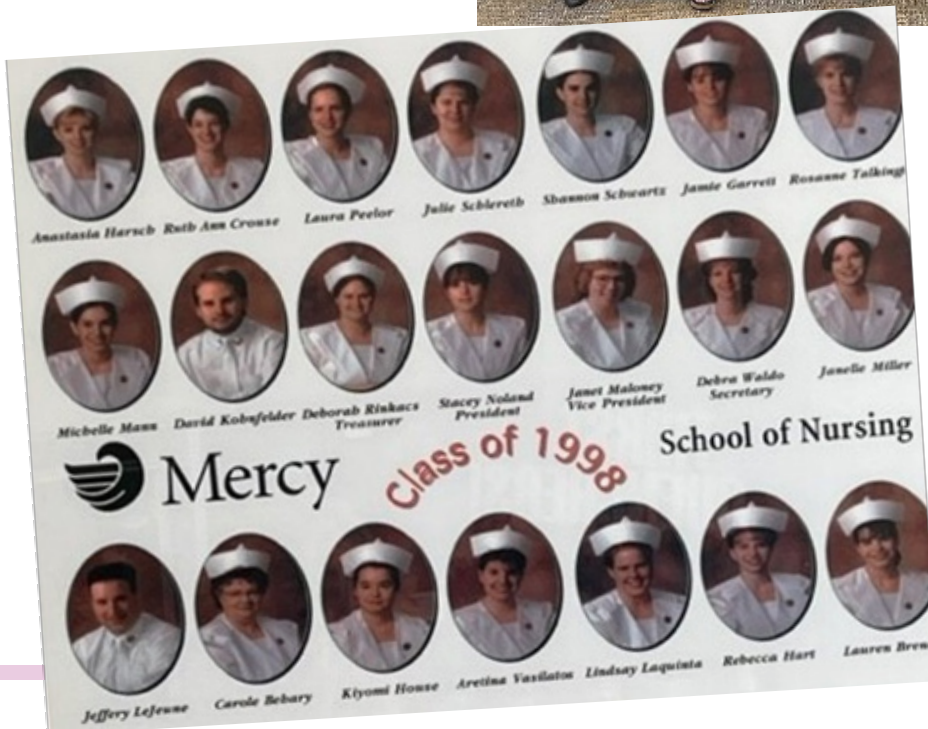
## RSVP ON PAGE 15

**CONGRATS TO  
THE CLASS OF  
1973  
CELEBRATING  
THEIR 50TH  
ANNIVERSARY**

Theresa Brown Krzemien, Class of '73, is willing to share her secrets on how she was able to locate members of her class in a few months to celebrate their 50th reunion. Their reunion was September 23, 2023 at Mercy—where it all began. Contact Theresa at [TheresaKrzemien@gmail.com](mailto:TheresaKrzemien@gmail.com).



**Front row:** Debbie Scheller Koch, Theresa Brown Krzemien, Sister Carolyn, Denise Tomarelli Shack, Ellen Passerell Klimowicz  
**Back:** Linda Schiovonni Basserly, Christine Arison Constantine, Susan Cobaugh, Madelyn Keller Jordan, Patricia Crooks Liebman, Ann Finch Lytle, Judy Durst Marco, Sarah Russell Skarzenski, Alice Logue Oakes, Jamie Trombacco Goslin, Sandra Wilson Colatrella, Patti Mraz Ludwig-Beamer, Katie Ellsesser Kleinkort, Kris Ali Cacciotti, Sue Wright Majoris, Sharon Barkley Wehr



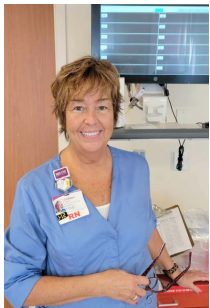
**HAPPY 25TH  
ANNIVERSARY  
CLASS OF 1998**

# THE CAMEOS OF CARING AWARDS

**The Cameos of Caring Awards** were created to honor exceptional bedside nurses who work at acute care hospitals. The program was established in 1999 in keeping with the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing's commitment to the advancement and promotion of the nursing profession. Each institution nominated the nurse who they believe best fits the award qualifications.

**We are proud to announce that three Mercy Alumni were among the 2023 Awardees!**

- Colleen M. Harkins Yaksick '80
- Amy Cannon Gentilcore '87
- Stacey Schaeffer '92



**Colleen M. Harkins Yaksick '80**

This is my synopsis of working as an RN 40 plus years at Mercy Hospital. I believe we are placed on this earth at an exact time and place that allows us to discover, then

choose what direction we travel. I was born at Mercy Hospital in August 1960. My parents were a newly married Irish Catholic couple, and I was their first born. My father, a City of Pittsburgh Firefighter, was assigned to Engine Company #4 located in the Lower Hill District on Forbes Ave., the block next to the Mercy Campus. Many times, we would visit dad at the firehouse. My mother often made time to stop at the Mercy Chapel, offer a prayer or a donation, or visit an ailing family/friend. Mother spoke in the highest regard of the Special Women who founded Mercy. I was told of the 7 Mercy Sisters, strong Irish Catholic women, who left their homes to establish a sanctuary for all who needed assistance. These bless-

ed women established Mercy Hospital in 1847. Their mission included the acceptance of all people, especially those who were burdened with illness, poverty, abandonment, hardships, and all varieties of physical and mental challenges. Being the oldest child, I became my parents #1 assistant while growing up. I was given many responsibilities as my siblings arrived. I naturally accepted the caregiver role and exceeded any expectations. My mother returned to the work force, as I assumed many roles to help our family run smoothly. Walking the neighborhood children back and forth to school, starting meals, helping with homework, basically doing what was asked of me. I never appreciated then the valuable life lessons I was taught. During high school I volunteered as a candy striper at Mercy. Wearing my red and white jumper and authentic white Oxford nursing shoes filled my soul with a real sense of purpose. As graduation approached it was time to decide what path I would choose to become an independent productive member of society. The options were limited back then, and I was anxious to explore the world away from my family home. Mercy Hospital School of Nursing appealed to me in many ways. I was accustomed to the Nuns, having attended Catholic grade school and high school, uniforms made daily dressing easy, punctually meant arriving 10 minutes early for appointments. Decision made! I graduated Mercy School of Nursing in August of 1980. I was hired as a brand new GN to the staff of the brand-new ICU on the fourth floor. Orientation was a serious process, lasting 6 months in ICU. The senior staff embraced us GNs and gave us every opportunity to thrive. A weekly verbal question and answer session administered by the assistant head nurse gave me a concrete scale to base my progress. I was successful in passing State Boards on my first attempt. I was

an RN . During my years at Mercy, I never left the fourth floor. I spent years in the ICU, the CCU, and the post cardiac stent/angioplasty unit. Discovering Cardiology was my passion. I went to the Cardiac Cath Lab working closely with pre and post procedure patients. I ventured into the area of cardiology stress test lab. Became proficient in assisting the Echocardiogram Department, performing Transesophageal Echocardiograms and DC Cardioversions. I maintain a Certification in Use and Safety regarding Moderate Sedation. I routinely am responsible for the precepting of all new RN staff to my work area. Recently I developed an orientation process for some of our Telemetry Technicians. I am available to help, answer questions, offer support, and continue the outstanding work done in Cardiology every day. Over the years I have been honored to receive 2 Shining Star Awards, a Daisy Award, and most recently the Compassion and Caring Award at Mercy this past May. I have been fortunate to have received many notes, cards, and thank you letters from grateful patients. I consider myself fortunate to have been able to assist the Mercy population.... I think the 7 Sisters would be pleased. I chose the nursing profession so many years ago because I felt that I could contribute my compassion and support to people that were struggling. I feel the need to contribute to the world every day. Nursing allows me to connect in a very special manner. I have learned to meet people where they are....respect their essence....learn their wisdom.... gain their trust....strive to always find the positivity hidden in their fears. This profession fills my soul. I am humbled by the faith my coworkers, managers and patients place in me. Many stories come to mind when I reflect on ordinary days working on the fourth floor.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

## THE CAMEOS OF CARING AWARDS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

A distraught young angry woman crossed my path one morning. She refused testing, became anxious, and demanded to be taken back to her room. So back she went. Much later that day she returned for testing at the doctor's insistence. She immediately commented on my brand-new colorful Nike shoes. As I thanked her for her compliment she asked, "Can I have them?" A bit surprised, I asked her what size shoe she wears. "9 and a half". Knowing this was a sign from above...I sat beside her and placed my shoes on her feet! An absolute perfect fit! I knew in that instant she needed those beautiful shoes so much more than I will ever know. So thankful, she wore them for the rest of her hospital stay. Another patient after testing was told she must return for a heart cath by weeks end. She was alone, traveling by ACCESS, and had no one to explain her situation to. I could see her sadness, her fear, her isolation. We exchanged numbers, I coordinated her return to Mercy, got her through the procedure, explained everything to her in words she understood. I took the responsibility of getting her into her apartment that day, after we picked up her prescriptions and filled her fridge with food and have been in contact with her ever since. She calls when she requires assistance but better than that, she calls me her friend. That is a win in my world! Nursing allowed me to experience many special, private, sorrowful, and joy-

ous occasions with people that perhaps I would have never met.

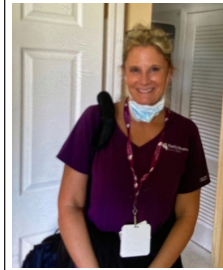


■ Congrats to **Amy Cannon Gentilcore '87** from AHN Jefferson Hospital. "I was shocked and totally surprised to receive this award," said

Amy, "there are so many wonderful nurses at Jefferson to pick from." Amy has worked in the Cardiothoracic ICU (CTICU) for the past 22 years, noting "I took the long way to get here." Amy went to Pitt for 2 years exploring various health care careers. Deciding to pursue nursing meant 4 more years at Pitt. A friend was going to Mercy in the 2-year program, and that sounded perfect for Amy. "I felt like at Mercy we had so much hands-on experience and you start right away. Another wonderful thing is that Carlow University accepts Mercy's credits toward a BSN, which I earned in 2 years in their weekend program."

Amy said she always wanted to work with open heart surgical patients and credits her Critical Care instructor Joanne Sperry, "She was really great," said Amy. "But I knew

I needed to get some solid clinical experience first, so I started out working in other units." Amy finds CTICU nursing very rewarding. "The patients are at the worst time in their life, and it's great to help them get back to good health...and to see that when they come back to visit us."



**Stacey Schaeffer '92**, is the Cameo of Caring Award-ee from UPMC Family Hospice. Stacey has been a full-time hospice nurse for 16 years, including

10 years with UPMC. "I had a sister who died of cancer at a young age. I saw how much hospice care helped her and helped our family. That's really why I wanted to get into this area of nursing." Stacey explained the rewards of her work center around educating and guiding the family to "take the fear away." The nurses also make use of available resources to try to fulfill a patient's last wish, perhaps it's a trip they want to take. "Recently a 102-year-old patient wanted to go to the casino," said Stacey, "and we made that happen...we do anything we can do to make someone comfortable at the end of life, which I think is a gift." A typical day for Stacey is a long one, traveling to see each patient in their home or the nursing facility they reside in. Evenings will often find her teaching a yoga class.

Before MHSN, Stacey earned a BS in Communications from Pitt with pre-med in mind. "That didn't work out...but then I was talking to a friend who was going to Mercy and right then I knew that was for me, small classes, personal attention, clinical experience starts right off the bat," she said, "Mercy was the best educational experience I ever had, hands down!"

### A Nurse's Prayer for God's Healing Presence

*Jesus, you are the Healer*

*who calls all nurses to serve and to care for people in your name.*

*As we carry out this holy ministry, be with us,*

*bless us with the wisdom of your Holy Spirit*

*and fill us with the compassion*

*that allows us to put the needs of those we serve before all else.*

*In the midst of this highly technological and often impersonal age*

*Let us not forget that nursing is fundamentally about being with people in need.*

*It is about touch ... a listening presence ... a willing and compassionate heart*

*that sees beyond symptoms and signs of illness*

*to a person in need and to their community of concern.*

*Help us to embrace the charism that is nursing ... to make it our own*

*and in so doing to bring your healing presence into the lives of people in need.*

*In your holy name we pray.*

*Amen*

To increase membership in 2024, the Board has decided to offer a Buy-One-Get-One sale!

You can bring a Mercy graduate (who is currently not a member) into the Alumni Association for free with your \$20 yearly paid dues. It's as easy as adding her/his name and addresses to the attached dues form. Thank you for helping to increase the number of registered Alumni.

## Alumni Association Dues Renewal 2023

### Please detach and return with your dues/donation

First	Maiden	Last	Class
Address			
Email address		Phone number	
<b>I am gifting a free 1-year membership to:</b>			
First	Maiden	Last	Class
Address			
Email address		Phone number	
\$20 membership _____	Donation to MHSN Alumni Association _____		
<b>Include photos and notes with your Mercy Memories and Updates!</b>			
<b>Please make checks payable to MHSN Alumni Association and mail to:</b>			
<b>MHSN Alumni, P.O. Box 53123, Pittsburgh, PA 15219</b>			

**SPRING  
FLING  
2024  
RSVP**

Name	Class of
Address	City
	State
	ZIP
Email	Phone

**MHSN Alumni Association**  
**P.O. Box 53123**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15219**