



Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Newsletter Fall 2025

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni,

If you ever want to be surrounded by excitement and pride of achievement, attend our nursing graduation ceremony. I attended this August and could sense the excitement and pride among the graduates. They acknowledged that the coursework was challenging but emphasized how they worked together to overcome each obstacle. I'm sure each of us has our own memories of how we persevered together—that's what truly binds us as a class.

It was an honor to speak at commencement. I shared a few words of wisdom with them and highlighted the importance of staying connected to the alumni. We play a crucial role in maintaining that sense of community and camaraderie.

As we near the end of 2025, I want to express my gratitude to our fantastic board members who volunteer their time and talents to keep us all together. We welcome new members to join our community.

We've made some changes to this newsletter due to cost and sustainability concerns. This edition is intentionally shorter, but we'll continue with an expanded newsletter in the spring. Please keep checking our website and social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, for more updates.

We value your input and want to hear from you. Don't hesitate to reach out via email or write us a letter. Your memories and accomplishments are what truly connect us as alumni and keep us going.

Regards,
Marian Kowatch Bindas '85

Memorial Mass

November 15, 2025
11 a.m. Mercy Hospital Chapel
Luncheon – 12 noon
RSVP by Nov. 2 - form on Page 8

EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Director of MHSN

Angela Balistrieri '96

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Megan Melia Stiger '85

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Maureen Melia Chadwick '84

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KEEP IN TOUCH!

Email: mercyalums@gmail.com
Website: mhsnpittsburghalumni.com

WE HAVE A NEW MAILING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 4412
Pittsburgh, PA 15205

A NOTE FROM SISTER CAROLYN

Dear MHSN Alumni,

Those who attended the Spring Fling in 2024 would remember Father Emmanuel. He was delighted to be with us. After a brief period of severe illness, he experienced what I call a Celestial Discharge, Home to God the Father. May he rest in peace.

I look forward to seeing you at the Memorial Mass on November 15th at 11:00 a.m. followed by lunch. It is always a delight to be with you. In the meantime, while being good to others, don't forget to be good to yourselves.

Fondly,
Sister Carolyn

UPMC MERCY SCHOOL OF NURSING UPDATE

Hi Alumni Friends,

I hope you are all doing well and ready for some fall weather. Our school continues to thrive as we have a record enrollment for Fall 2025. We welcomed 137 new students on September 2nd. We are thrilled that so many people are still interested in nursing as a profession and chose to start their education at UPMC Mercy School of Nursing. Our history and tradition blended with today's technologies and educational practices continue to move us forward as a leader in nursing education.

We also want to recognize our August graduates. We had 62 students graduate from the program in August. A beautiful graduation was held at Soldiers and Sailors. Our very own Marian Bindas was the graduation speaker, providing wisdom on a career in nursing. We wish all the graduates the best of luck as they begin their own nursing journeys.

I wish everyone a safe, healthy, and blessed holiday season.

As always, we are appreciative of your support of our school of nursing, graduates, and the traditions of Mercy.

Best,
Angela Balistrieri '96
Director, School of Nursing

SCHOLARSHIP CORNER

Scholarship opportunities are available from the MHSN Alumni Association for members in good standing (i.e. dues paid in 2024 and 2025). An annual budget of \$2000 will be distributed among applicants.

Scholarships will be awarded in the following categories: College Course; Conference Fee; Continuing Education; Certifications in Professional Nursing Specialties; and Professional Nursing Organization Memberships.

Application deadline: November 30, 2025. Scholarship money will be awarded in April 2026. For an application, email mercyalums@gmail.com.

CAMEOS OF CARING

Gabriel Schreiner Class of 2023 is the 2025 Cameos of Caring recipient for the Emergency Department at St. Clair Hospital in Mt. Lebanon, Pa,

Congrats!
MHSN Alumni Association
is really proud of you!

Mercy Angels



Marguerite Gonzales Rooney	11/06/24	1947
Marjorie Turocy Truschel	04/25/25	1949
Virginia Robinson Crowe	12/21/24	1950
Dorothy Murtha Pearl	03/04/01	1950
Doris Cagna Madonna	04/12/25	1951
Audrey Simcoko Messina	06/27/24	1952
Jean Keel Bolecky	09/10/25	1954
Jean Olszewski McConnell	08/28/24	1956
Rose Marie DePaoli Courie	12/28/23	1956
Claudette Mary Dresmich McCormick	08/20/20	1956
Cecil Maygers Voyce	06/16/23	1957
Mary Carrick Brown	05/24/25	1957
Victoria Damato	04/01/18	1957
Lorraine Sweeney Wagner	09/15/25	1957
Donna Durst Wyeth	04/07/25	1958
Janet Ganley Sendek	08/12/25	1959
Dorothy Fink Ferrang	11/26/21	1960
Mary Ann Novak Gasper	12/21/24	1960
Marian Elborne Poirier	09/29/15	1960
Patricia Kosky Tirdel	01/06/25	1960
Carol Stasik Wunderich	03/15/20	1960
Mary Alice Moran Wagner	11/28/24	1961
Susan Cummins Edgar	05/05/20	1961
Mary Ann Mullaugh McGee	06/23/25	1962
Carol Lalli Mateje	09/05/24	1964
Kathleen Kennane Mrenak	03/29/25	1965
Patricia Szczerbiak	10/17/10	1989

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



**MHSN Christmas
Ornament
available from
Wendell August Forge**

[https://www.wendellaugust.com/
products/mercy-
hospital-school-of-nursing
-ornament](https://www.wendellaugust.com/products/mercy-hospital-school-of-nursing-ornament)

MEMORIAL MASS

NOVEMBER 15, 2025

11 A.M. MERCY HOSPITAL CHAPEL

*For where two or three are gathered in my
name, there am I in the midst of them.*

- Matthew 18:20

The Mercy Alumni Association continues the
beautiful tradition of gathering together every
November for a Mass in remembrance of our
Mercy Angels.

Fr. Jim Dowds will be the celebrant.

12 noon – Lunch in Clark Auditorium

Chicken Parmesan, Pasta,
Vegetable, Salad, Rolls, Cake

RSVP by November 2

Mail in the form on Page 8

IDEAS NEEDED FOR 2026!

What kind of alumni activities would you
attend? Purse Bash, Summer Picnic, Retreat,
Pirates baseball game, Washington Wild
Things baseball game in Washington, Pa., bus
trip, Steelers game watch party ... We welcome
your ideas!

Email: mercyalums@gmail.com

*This shortened newsletter only allowed
space for the basics. But there is MORE!*

*Please check our updated MHSN Alumni
website for the Fall newsletter with additional
pages for Alumni News and Memories, Reunion
news, Cameos of Caring Awardees, etc.*

<https://mhsnpittsburghalumni.com>

CONNECT WITH US!

Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Pittsburgh

Web site: www.mhsnpittsburghalumni.com

Email: mercyalums@gmail.com

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/people/Mercy-Hospital-School-
of-Nursing-Alumni-Association/100063573370678/](https://www.facebook.com/people/Mercy-Hospital-School-of-Nursing-Alumni-Association/100063573370678/)

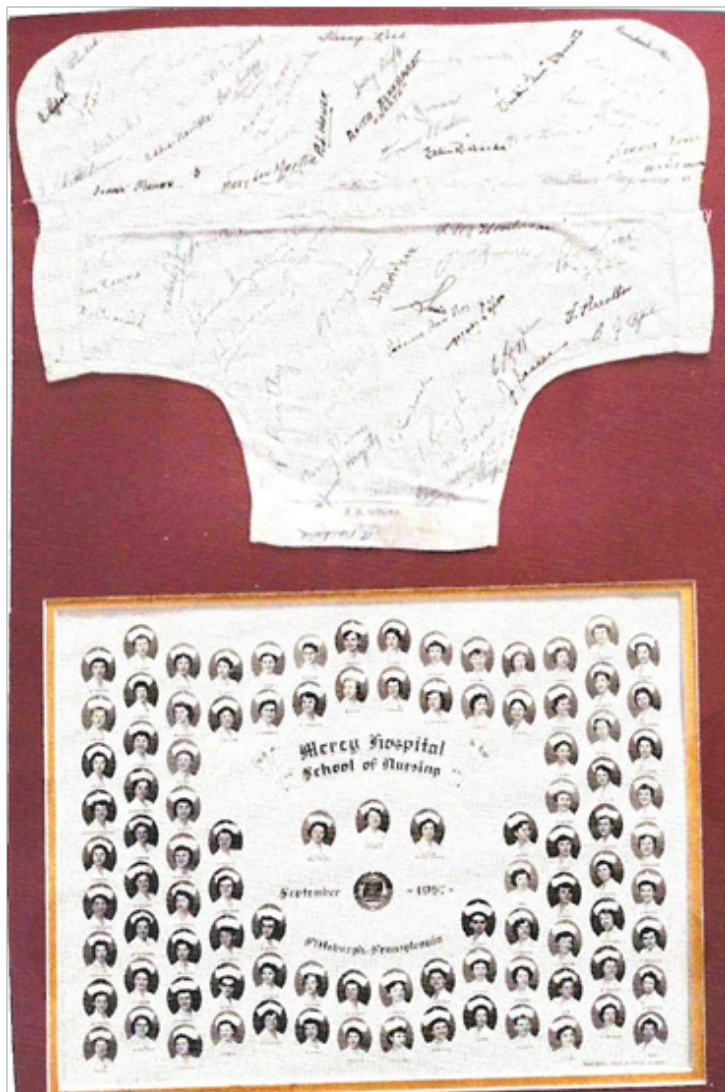
ALUMNI NEWS & MEMORIES

Joanne Griffith Lowry '57

In our senior year summer, we got a clean and freshly starched cap and had classmates sign it. Found mine just recently in the cedar chest. Got it framed with my class picture. Oh, how we loved our caps. Sadly today, no one wears them.



Barb Vasiloff Mesher '57 with her sister's graduate cap. She couldn't find her student cap. **Joanne Griffith Lowry '57** is wearing the cape we received early on.



WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM YOU!

Please keep sharing
your updates and
memories!

Search your closets,
albums, wherever you
have your old pictures
and memories!

Submit to:
mercyalums@gmail.com
or mail to MHSN
Alumni, P.O. Box 4412,
Pittsburgh PA. 15205

We will add them to the
newsletter, Facebook
and/or the web site.
Please remember to add
names and graduation
years!



Joanne Griffith Lowry '57 with her daughter, **Catherine Lowry Choy '91**

Dorothy Kornosky Mayernik '67

Joanne Lowry's photo and fond memory of our caps reminded me of this experience. Several years ago I filled in for a faculty member at Carlow University as clinical instructor for Mental Health Nursing. My group of students was assigned to do a teaching project to the moms and dads at Angel's Place, a supportive community for single parents and their children. They offer childcare, early childhood education, meals and snacks, and a caring environment to enable low-income single parents to pursue their career goals as a full-time student. It's really a wonderful place.

The Carlow nursing students prepared a puppet show for their teaching project. As they were setting up their cardboard stage and props, I took the nurse puppet around the room to show the children. I stopped by a sweet little preschooler, held up the puppet, and asked her, "Do you know what she is?" And the little girl immediately replied, "Princess."

I was really taken aback by her answer! I totally agree that nurses are "royalty"...but wonder if this is the generation that will no longer recognize a nurse's cap as a symbol of our profession. Ask your young daughters and granddaughters!



ALUMNI NEWS & MEMORIES CONTINUED

Carolyn Pandolfo '20

Thanks for sending this request for updates!

I graduated from Mercy in August 2020. Since that time, I have remained in Pittsburgh and worked at the bedside in psychiatry and addiction medicine as both a staff nurse and charge nurse. In the middle of the pandemic, I transitioned into public health nursing and have held multiple leadership roles, serving in the private sector and in the public sector at the county and state levels. Since becoming an RN, I have become certified in project management and board-certified in infection control; both of which have helped me find tremendous meaning in my career! I am also halfway through my Master of Public Health degree from Boston University where I will graduate in 2026.

On a personal note, I have traveled to four new countries as a tourist since graduating from Mercy. I bought a new home in the city and am preparing to marry and start a family in the coming year or so. As a volunteer, I have coached with Girls on the Run and served on the board of directors for Proud Haven. I also volunteer with the National Board of Public Health Examiners on its exam writing committee! I am grateful every day to be a nurse and appreciate the education and support I received from Shadyside and Mercy Schools of Nursing. Thanks for everything! Carolyn Pandolfo, BS, RN, CHES, CHC, PMP, CIC

Ashley and Gabriel Schreiner '23

Hi there!

My husband and I are Fall 2023 grads, but I wanted to send over an accomplishment/professional update on his behalf. Gabriel Schreiner class of 2023 is the 2025 Cameos of Caring Recipient for the Emergency Department at St Clair Hospital. He won't brag but I am really proud! Warm regards! — Ashley Schreiner

Hello, my name is **Laura Reese** and I am a member of the class of **2018**. Since graduating, I have been a psychiatric nurse at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. I have worked on the Dual Diagnosis unit, the Behavioral Health ICU, and I currently work on the Child and Adolescent unit. I also serve as adjunct faculty at Carlow University and Misericordia University. I love teaching the next generation of nurses and sharing my knowledge and passion for psychiatric nursing. In the spring, I will be attending PennWest University to obtain my DNP.

Pat Griess Nunley '75

After 37 years of nursing, mostly in the OR and in 3 different states, my husband and I retired to coastal Delaware. Retirement went well with my finally catching up on lost sleep after decades of being on call and doing shift work. I learned to play pickle ball, enjoyed day trips to the nearby beaches, and had way too many lunches out with the ladies! But in 2017, a fellow nurse neighbor and I were lounging by the pool, talk turned to our being nurses, and we casually wondered how many other nurses were in our growing community? A decision was made to find out! An email went out asking for all retired and active registered nurses to respond...and lo and behold 3 weeks later I had 18 nurses, including one male nurse, in my living room. For several years our group met quarterly, always as a social event to discuss past jobs, to commiserate over unpleasant doctors we have known in the past, and to have a few snacks. But, as the Covid shutdown began in 2020, we responded to a plea from our local hospital to make masks for the nursing staff, as their supplies were running low. Quickly we had a couple hundred masks, all homemade, to distribute, much to the staff's surprise. Since then, our "social" nurses' group

slowly expanded to take on a more education-based turn and soon we were providing outside speakers of interest, coordinating vaccination clinics, and having CPR training events in our senior community. Health issues the last couple of years, unfortunately, have lessened my involvement in the group, but I am proud that that other woman (who sadly passed away recently) and I originated this blossoming group of now 23 nurses! I guess the old adage stays true - once a nurse, always a nurse.

Cappy Brennan Helms '96

I thought I'd send you all a brief note to go along with my dues this year. I've been enjoying hearing about Mercy Hospital School of Nursing updates only recently, but I've never forgotten where it all started for me.

In 1992 our family suffered the tragic loss of our son, Jack, born in June 1992 with the effects of toxoplasmosis in utero. We were so very fortunate to have lived in Wexford, PA at the time, with the tremendous support of Children's Hospital right nearby. While Baby Jack's 3 months of life wasn't what we planned, we were so blessed to have fallen into the caring hands of that hospital and their wonderful and YOUNG! Nurses. At the last week of our beautiful son's short life, I stayed at that hospital with him, totally embedded with him along with the other seriously ill children and their mothers at the time, and was introduced to what nursing was all about. I was so moved by them and what they did, and no doubt by God's hand, which often happens during times of crises, that after Baby Jack's death at home in early October, I was enrolled in pre-nursing classes as of January, working towards my eventual graduation from MHSN in May of 1996. That time in my life

Continued on Page 6

ALUMNI NEWS & MEMORIES CONTINUED

was pivotal, to say the least, and I've never looked back. I took my RN license and made it work for me and our family, finding many different jobs, gaining lots of new experiences along the way. It was no surprise, really, when I was approached in 2005 by a hospice nurse who, upon meeting me, asked if I had ever considered hospice nursing since she felt I would be perfect for it. And, in fact, I was! It seemed to be a perfect fit for 11 years. I had so many wonderful experiences there, all while helping me continue to slowly work through my own grief.

I have been working for the UVA Cancer Center in Fishersville, VA for the last 5 years. I needed a change and new challenges, which I have found where I am. I work with a great group of professionals while still being able to help patients as they try to manage all the high emotions and sometimes end of life decisions.

I am so grateful for all of the help and support I received at MHSN. And I am so proud that my adult daughter is also now pursuing her nursing career! She's been an elementary school teacher since graduating from college. Sadly, after 15 years or so of teaching she's come to realize that there's just no future in it for her. With some influence from me, of course, she sees and agrees that the emotional and financial rewards that the nursing field has to offer are so much greater. Good-for her! Bless you all at MHSN and thank you for being there when I needed you.

Congratulations to the Class of 1975 on their 50th Anniversary! They will celebrate on November 1 with a Mass in the Mercy Hospital Chapel, followed by a luncheon and reunion with classmates.

Angels of Allegheny will once again join us at the Memorial Mass on November 15. The ceremony they conduct to honor our Mercy Angels is beautiful and touches the heart. If any Mercy alumni in Allegheny County are interested in joining this group, email mercyalums@gmail.com.



Marlene Hudak '81

I am honored to have joined Angels of Westmoreland, a group of Nursing professionals who pay tribute to those in our profession who have passed away. Melanie Pantalone is the acting President and put together the Honor Guard ceremony. Family members may contact Melanie to request us to take part in the funeral or memorial services.



JoAnn Vietmeier Alexa '68

I have a notebook full of memorable patient stories. What other profession can provide that? How blessed we were to choose nursing! There's a group of young patients that I've never forgotten. My group #4 were doing our "Home for Crippled Children" pediatric rotation in the mid-1960s. The song "Daydream Believer" by the Monkees was the #1 nationwide hit song at the time. The teenage patients that we were assigned to played it continuously in their social room. They loved that song! Their bodies/brains may have been damaged, but their youthful hormones were wholly intact: they would wheel their chair over to their current crush to hold another's welcoming deformed hand, utter some garbled sound, speaking through bright eyes and big smiles. To see and hear this, knowing the boys would never be more than "daydream believers" and the girls never to become "homecoming queens" was so very sad to witness. They were the same age as we were; our futures were just starting; their futures were already decided. "Daydream Believer" is on my playlist – I think of those kids every time I hear it.



**Angels of
Westmoreland
Honor Guard**

The Angels of Westmoreland Honor Guard is a volunteer organization of active and retired nurses (LPNs, RNs, Nurse Practitioners and Nurse Anesthetists). When a colleague passes away, whether retired or active in the nursing field, the Honor Guard will provide an Honor Guard presentation that lasts less than 10 minutes at the location of the service. Donations are accepted to offset the cost of supplies. If interested in joining the Honor Guard or in having a service provided for a loved one, contact Melanie L. Pantalone, President at melanie@pantalone.com.



ALUMNI NEWS & MEMORIES CONTINUED

Class of 1967

2004



Sigler, Sanfilippo
Adams, Tomko
ML Smith, MM Smith
Tincha, Roganmoser,
Jockey, Schmidt

2019



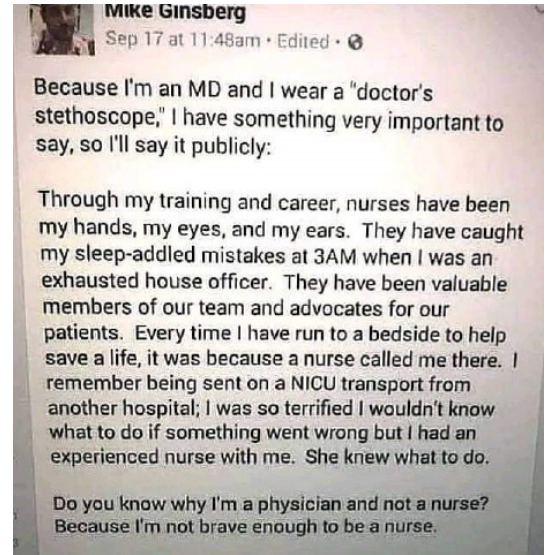
Smith Tincha
Tomko Sanfilippo
Sigler Roganmoser
Schmidt

Class of 1960 in Dorm Room



④→② front row Mimi Baumann,
Mariane Elborne, Kay Donahue,
Back row - Gretchen Dean, Marybelle
Rawlinson, Kay Guthrie
foreground Sheila Bonar

FOUND ON FACEBOOK



DO YOU RECOGNIZE ANYONE FROM THE CLASS OF 1953?



MHSN Alumni Association
P.O. Box 4412
Pittsburgh, PA 15205



Mercy Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association

☐ Memorial Mass & Luncheon: \$30 ☐ Dues for 2026: \$25 ☐ Donation _____

RSVP by Nov. 2

First Name	Maiden	Last	Class Year
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Address

Email	Phone number
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Amount enclosed: _____ Make check payable to: “MHSN Alumni Assn.”

MAIL TO: MHSN Alumni Association
P.O. Box 4412
Pittsburgh, PA 15205