



THE PULSE OF GREENLEAF

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER • SEPTEMBER • 2025



UPCOMING EVENTS

**Homecoming
Celebration Dinner
October 3, 2025
6:30pm**

**Homecoming
Celebration Brunch
October 4, 2025
11am**

DR. MELINDA COOLING NAMED DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Dr. Melinda Cooling DNP, MBA, APRN, FNP-BC, NEA-BC, FAANP is Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing's Distinguished Alumni.

Dr. Cooling graduated from Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing in 1998. She continued her education to become a Nurse Practitioner, Vice President of Advanced Practice, created OSF OnCall for digital health care, and now serves as Chief of Nursing and APP Executive for the OSF HealthCare System. Dr. Cooling has a comprehensive research background and has received grant funding for the OSF System over the years. Her work has been presented nationally and internationally.



Dr. Melinda Cooling

The school /college is celebrating 120 years of nursing education. The founding Sisters began the school of nursing in February 1905 and has educated thousands of nurses now serving communities around the world. Dr. Cooling will receive the 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award for her accomplishments and contributions to nursing at the Homecoming celebration on October 3rd.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Saint Francis Medical Center School/College of Nursing Alumni!

We have exciting plans to bring in the fall 2025 semester. First of all, I am happy to report that we welcomed Dr. Mary McNamara as our Provost at both colleges in August. Dr. McNamara comes to us from Loyola University and brings her skills in curriculum development and faculty practice models to the college of nursing. Dr. McNamara has a vision and a plan to assist me with maintaining a high-quality nursing education program that meets the healthcare needs of the communities our graduates will serve in.



Dr. Mary McNamara

We started offering the LPN-BSN program this fall. There are currently over 200 LPNs working within the OSF Healthcare System. The OSF funding program is a wonderful opportunity for these working nurses to enhance their education, thereby increasing the number of registered nurses with a BSN.

The partnership with Monmouth is looking very positive as 24 freshmen were admitted with an end goal of taking the Saint Francis Accelerated program in their final year of study in Fall 2028. The teaching Nursing Home Project will begin in January through a partnership with a local nursing home to allow junior students the opportunity to learn how to care for older adults. Those students will learn key measures of quality and safety including fall prevention, prevention of skin breakdown, medication management, and caring for persons with dementia.

There are many activities planned to celebrate the 120th year of the college of nursing. On Friday, October 3rd we will celebrate our Distinguished Alumni, Dr. Melinda Cooling, along with four other individuals who will be recognized for their contribution to nursing. On Saturday October 4th we will celebrate with the traditional brunch, view school uniforms over the years, enjoy presentations from our four awardees, and participate in the silent auction.

Cheers to another 120 years of excellence in nursing education, service, and leadership at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing.

Dr. Charlene Aaron

President

OSF Colleges of Nursing



GREETINGS ALUMNI,

ALUMNI UPDATE

Since our last newsletter, your alumni association has been active. Several alumni met at the college during Nurse's Week and provided homemade cookies for students. It was an opportunity to engage with current students who loved listening to stories shared by our alumni. We distributed insulated lunch bags with our Alumni logo to graduating seniors during Senior send-off and invited them to become our newest members. Many attended our Spring College event at the winery which offered an opportunity for excellent food, wine and socialization.



Mary Donnelly '79
Alumni Association
President

With this newsletter we once again turn our attention to Fall and the activities to come. Please mark your calendars for Saturday 10/4 from 11-2 for our Homecoming Brunch. The brunch is free and we will have our fabulous silent basket auction (last year we had over 70 baskets!) with proceeds going to student scholarships. This year will be the CON's 120th year so we hope to see

a wonderful turn out! We have additional surprises planned for this event so don't miss out. Reach out to your classmates and if you need help with addresses, contact our Alumni representative, Carlene.J.Murali@osfhealthcare.org for assistance.

Alumni Association meetings are combined with good food and socialization at various restaurants. We would love to see more of you attend. We currently meet at noon but with increased interest, can move these back to evening or even a 50/50 split. Let us know the best time for you to attend.

We are open to ideas for events you would like to see, so reach out and share your ideas. Our times together are a reminder of times shared as well as an opportunity to keep current with a college that has had such an impact on our lives. The work we do through our alumni association provides opportunities to celebrate those times, give back to the college in ways we can and engage with students who are working to join us in this noblest of professions! Looking forward to seeing you on October 4th!

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE IN NURSING EDUCATION SINCE 1905



NIGHTINGALE TRIBUTE

The Illinois Valley Nurse Honor Guard (IVNHG) had the privilege to complete the Nightingale Tribute on September 10th for Marcella McCann. Four of the members participating had Mrs. McCann as one of their nursing instructors. There are currently 59 members of the IVNHG, of which 10 are St. Francis Hospital School of Nursing / College of Nursing Alumni.

Marcy McCann was a member of the faculty at the School of Nursing and later the College of Nursing for many years up until her retirement. She was a devoted teacher who inspired new generations of healthcare professionals. She frequently remarked that she loved the “brand new student” so she could teach them “the basics” first which started with listening. Marcy’s students remember her not only as a gifted teacher but as a mentor who guided them with patience, wisdom and heart. It was a special moment to witness the IVNHG pay tribute to Marcy and her years of love and service.

The Nurse Honor Guard is a group of volunteer nurses who pay respect to a fellow nurse who has died. The Nightingale Tribute is like a military tribute. It is steeped in symbolism, including the regalia worn, the nurses cap and cape. The Nightingale lamp and a white rose symbolizing the dedication to the nursing profession is presented to the family. A final Call for Duty is performed during the brief solemn ceremony, officially ending the earthly duty of that nurse. Depending on family wishes and funeral accommodations, this recognition is done at the end of the visitation period or prior to funeral service. Living tributes can also be performed for nurses nearing the end of life.

Membership is open to any nurse retired or working. National and State Chapters require the wearing of prescribed regalia (white uniform, cap and cape for women; navy pants, white shirt and stole for men). Regalia is acquired through IVNHG. You determine the frequency of your participation. Active membership only requires participation in at least one tribute/event per year and attendance at one business meeting. If you would like to join IVNHG or need more information, contact the President of IVNHG, Margie (McKirgan) Francisco (Class of 1978, 2005) at ivnursehonorguard@gmail.com.



Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing Alumni Margie Francisco, diploma and MSN program (left) and Jean Rose DeRenzy, diploma program (right)

In November 2024, a group of Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) students, faculty, and administrators embarked on a journey to the Dominican Republic to both learn from and serve another culture. Over the course of four days, the team established and operated medical clinics in four different villages, providing primary care services to more than 400 patients.



DEANS IN THE D.R.

Guided by our mission to serve with the greatest care and love, the team approached each patient encounter not only as a medical appointment but as an opportunity to truly see, hear, and honor each individual. Whether



Suzanne Brown
RN, DNP, PhD

it was measuring blood pressure, prescribing medication, or simply holding a hand and offering reassurance, every act of care was infused with compassion and respect.

In addition to the clinics, we conducted home visits, delivering essential medical care to Dominicans and their families in their own living spaces.

These intimate visits provided students with an invaluable perspective on healthcare delivery in resource-limited settings and reinforced the need for cultural humility. They also reminded us that the heart of nursing extends far beyond walls and borders - it thrives wherever human need exists.

Stepping outside our tight-knit community into a global context deepened our appreciation for both the universality of human needs and the unique challenges faced by communities with limited access to healthcare. It was humbling to realize that while our resources

and surroundings may differ, the language of care, love, and respect is understood everywhere.

The trip was more than a clinical experience - it was a deeply human connection. We returned home with a piece of our heart still in the Dominican Republic, inspired by the resilience, joy, and warmth of the people we met. The bonds formed both within our team and with the communities we served will continue to shape our perspectives as nurses and as human beings.



Carole Eatock
DNP, APRN, FNP-C

This experience reinforced the importance of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and service in nursing practice - values that will guide the participants for years to come. With the College expanding to include undergraduate students this November, we look forward to seeing even more members of our community embrace opportunities to serve with the greatest care and love, both at home and across the globe.



PHOTOS FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



GET CONNECTED!



Help us to update the alumni database. To receive the latest news on events and updates from Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, please provide your current email, address, and phone number.



There have been many requests for a "Keep In Touch" section in the newsletter, and rebuilding our alumni database is essential to making this happen. We need to hear from you!

If you know of any fellow alumni who have not received the newsletter, please encourage them to send their updated contact information to Carlene.J.Murali@osfhealthcare.org.

FOLLOW US:



ALUMNI GEAR

If you are interested in purchasing an ornament, pewter pendant, or window decal, please contact Paulette Archer, Treasurer, at archoop@aol.com.



Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing periodically hosts "pop-up" online stores offering Alumni gear as well as other College merchandise. Look for shopping opportunities through social media channels.

For inquiries, please contact Austin Blair at Austin.W.Blair@osfhealthcare.org.

JOIN THE ASSOCIATION!

Our Annual membership (Sept-July) is \$20 and our Lifetime membership is \$250. Please make checks payable to the SFMCCON Alumni Association. You can send via mail to Paulette Archer, Alumni Treasurer, 1217 W Oakglen Dr. Peoria, Illinois 61614. If you have any questions, email her at archoop@aol.com. Please include your name, maiden name (if applicable), class/graduation year, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.

The SFMCCON Alumni Association is a 501c charitable organization. Scholarships are awarded to graduate and undergraduate students each year. Consider contributing by sending a check out to "SFMCCON Alumni Association" and mailing it to Paulette Archer, at the address above. A receipt will be sent to you for tax purposes.



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