

THE FLAME

2022-2023

Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University



ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY
Mennonite College of Nursing



Empowering future nurses

Mennonite College of Nursing launches Springfield location

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THE FLAME

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Dean's message



Dear Friends of MCN,

I am excited to share all that is happening at the Mennonite College of Nursing. This year, we hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for our \$18 million simulation expansion and a ribbon cutting for our new Springfield location. In addition, we wanted to honor our students' first year of clinicals and rite of passage into the field of nursing by adding a Stethoscope Ceremony. Not only are we growing, but our students are thriving and making a difference in health care at a state and national level. The Mennonite College of Nursing stands as a

beacon of excellence and commitment to the advancement of nursing education. With a strong emphasis on holistic care, ethical practice, and cultural sensitivity, the college has consistently produced graduates who not only excel in clinical skills but also embody a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of health and humanity.

Established with a rich heritage rooted in the Mennonite values of community, service, and compassion, this institution has been a cornerstone in shaping the next generation of nursing professionals. Now, as we stand at the threshold of the future of health care, the Mennonite College of Nursing is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of this dynamic and ever-evolving field. The challenges and opportunities that lie ahead demand a new breed of health care professionals—individuals who are not only technically proficient but also equipped with a global perspective, innovative mindset, and a commitment to addressing the diverse and complex needs of patients.

The future of health care is marked by unprecedented technological advancements, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a shift toward patient-centric care models. The Mennonite College of Nursing, with its progressive curriculum and cutting-edge research initiatives, is at the forefront of preparing nurses to navigate this changing terrain. From embracing digital health solutions to fostering a culture of continuous learning, the college is dedicated to empowering its students to be leaders in the rapidly evolving health care landscape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized "J".

Judy Neubrandner, Ed.D., FNP-BC
Dean, Mennonite College of Nursing

ILLINOIS STATE BREAKS GROUND ON MENNONITE COLLEGE OF NURSING SIMULATION CENTER



A crowd of more than 100 Illinois State University supporters, alumni, faculty, staff, and students gathered Friday, June 23, to celebrate breaking ground on the \$18 million Mennonite College of Nursing Simulation Center.

“This is an exciting day for Illinois State University,” said Interim President Aondover Tarhule. “The expansion of programs and facilities with the new Mennonite College of Nursing Simulation Center means we are playing an active—and leading—role in nursing education in Illinois.”

The 16,000-square-foot building located at the corner of Locust Street and Normal Avenue will wrap around the college’s existing simulation center and will feature an enhanced clinical education setting with virtual reality technology. The new space will enable the Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) to increase enrollment by 400 students, according to Tarhule.

“As we break ground today for the Nursing Simulation Center, we are moving closer to meeting the ongoing need for highly qualified nurses in this state and across the nation,” Dr. Tarhule said. “I look forward to the day when our students can begin learning in this new space.”

Scheduled to open in the fall of 2024, the Nursing Simulation Center will include space for interdisciplinary collaboration, additional student support, and increased research capabilities.

“It allows us to educate more exceptionally well-prepared nurses who will be a part of improving the health and well-being of our community and state,” said Dr. Judy Neubrander, dean of the Mennonite College of Nursing.

Neubrandner thanked the project’s “many, many” partners—including administrators, the Board of Trustees, donors, legislators, architects, engineers, and designers—who are making the Nursing Simulation Center vision, which has been nearly a decade in the making, a reality.

Dr. Kathy Bohn ’74, M.S. ’80, chair of the Board of Trustees, said as a physician, she “deeply appreciates the indispensable role nurses play in the health care field.” Bohn said MCN, bolstered by the new Nursing Simulation Center, will continue to be a recognized leader in preparing impactful nurses.

“An aging population, public health issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and rapidly evolving technology are just some of the many challenges facing health care professionals today,” Bohn said. “Education and skills-based training must be innovative and nimble to keep pace with those challenges.”

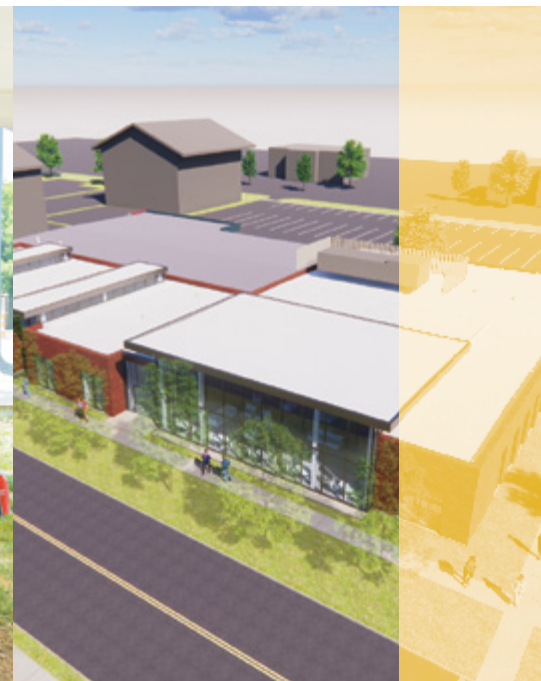
Steve Smith ’89, M.S. ’93, convener of the MCN Dean’s External Cabinet, said the Nursing Simulation Center will provide additional space for students in nursing, social work, speech pathology, audiology, nutrition, and

other disciplines to learn how to meet the needs of their future patients and clients through collaboration.

“As a result, the college will be expanding its student success program, allowing advisors to be on-site and readily accessible to students,” Smith said. “Our new student engagement space will offer students opportunities to work and learn in groups and develop lifelong friendships and engage in peer mentorship.”

A multipurpose space in the Nursing Simulation Center will also enhance MCN’s ability to host university and community workshops, trainings, and conferences, Smith added.

“This new simulation center will be a powerful reflection of MCN’s 104 years of nursing education excellence,” Smith said. “A year from now, when this building is open and filled with learning, it will reinforce the power and impact of Illinois State’s commitment to nursing and further solidify Mennonite College of Nursing’s reputation as a superior college of nursing within Illinois and across the United States.”



“I LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN OUR STUDENTS CAN BEGIN LEARNING IN THIS NEW SPACE.”

—Dr. Aondover Tarhule

MENNONITE COLLEGE OF NURSING, MEMORIAL HEALTH PARTNER FOR SPRINGFIELD NURSING EDUCATION FACILITY

By Whitney Canterbury

Illinois State University's Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) and Memorial Health have partnered to establish a new Springfield location for nursing education. The facility, located at 206 North Grand Ave. West in Springfield, was formally opened at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 18.

The Springfield location helps address a critical need for more nurses, will increase MCN's teaching capacity, and will create a pathway for more students to become nurses in Central Illinois. The center will host its first class of nursing students starting in August 2023.

"MCN has a 100-plus year history, and we are grateful to open a new chapter in Springfield," said Judy Neubrander, dean of Mennonite College of Nursing. "This vision is a jointly held view between our college and Memorial Health to better meet the health care needs of the central part of the state. Springfield

students will experience the same rigorous curriculum, while fully immersed in the Memorial Health system, with the hope they stay and practice in Central Illinois."

The Springfield location is available exclusively for transfer students, with classes taught in a modern, freshly renovated facility. MCN nursing students will practice skills in Memorial Health's state-of-the-art nursing simulation environment and will gain clinical experience at five hospitals within the Memorial Health network. Students in Springfield will work under the same curriculum as students at MCN's main campus location at Illinois State.

"Recent challenges in the field of health care have helped us focus on what's really important—the care we provide to our patients and our communities," said Ed Curtis, president and CEO of Memorial Health. "Now more than ever, it's essential that we provide young people who are interested in a health care career with a pathway to success. We're pleased to partner with ISU on this effort to increase the number of nurses in Central Illinois."

"In my travels across rural Illinois, it has become abundantly clear that the shortage of nurses and health care professionals is no mere statistic; it's a reality that touches lives, communities, and the very heart of our health care system," said Sen. Dick Durbin, who attended the ribbon cutting ceremony in Springfield. "Institutions like Illinois State University and Memorial Health, who understand that investing locally in nursing leaders is the path forward, exemplify the type of partnership that will shape the future of the health workforce."

Mennonite College of Nursing has a 100-plus-year history and joined Illinois State in 1999. With an



A crowd of supporters, ISU colleagues, students, local health care employees, and politicians gather to celebrate the opening of the Springfield location.



Illinois State University's Interim President Aondover Tarhule addresses the crowd at the Springfield ribbon cutting ceremony.

NCLEX (nursing licensure exam) five-year average pass rate of 94%, beating both the state and national average, the program is highly sought after by prospective students. Memorial Health hospitals have received multiple Magnet and Pathway to Excellence designations, which recognize the highest standards of nursing quality.

"MCN's partnership with Memorial Health embodies Illinois State's core values of collaboration and learning and scholarship," said Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Ani Yazedjian. "It opens up many new and exciting academic opportunities for our students and our faculty members. It will also provide a tremendous boost to the health care field in Central Illinois by preparing highly qualified nurses for the workforce."

"MCN's partnership with Memorial Health embodies Illinois State's core values of collaboration and learning and scholarship"

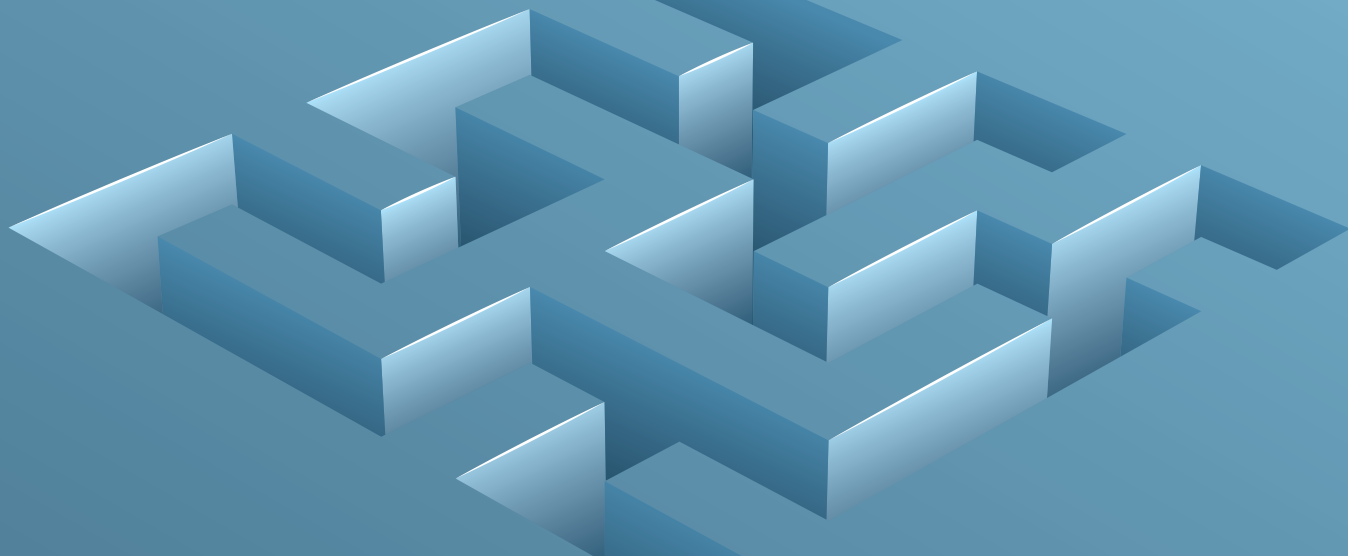
— Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Ani Yazedjian

"Memnonite College of Nursing's reputation for excellence in nursing education stretches back to its origins a century ago," said Illinois State University Interim President Aondover Tarhule. "It has steadily expanded its educational offerings to help meet the need for more nurses and nursing educators. The partnership with Memorial Health that made this facility possible is the latest development in a long and storied history."



Dr. Judy Neubrandner shares plans for Memnonite College of Nursing growth on Redbird Buzz

During a recent episode of Redbird Buzz, Dr. Judy Neubrandner shares how the Memnonite College of Nursing (MCN) is poised to face the nursing shortage head on, how current students are learning to care for themselves along with their patients, and how MCN's new location and expanded simulation center will help produce the next generation of nurses.



Navigating nursing school *and* EMPOWERing STUDENTS *for success*

By Whitney Canterbury

The transition from high school to a four-year university is not always seamless for incoming freshmen. They're living alone, managing responsibilities they've never had before, and experiencing a new type of freedom. This is all true for nursing students who are now engulfed in a rigorous educational program. Nursing students come into Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) with some of the highest GPAs at the University. Yet sometimes these high performers need additional support as they navigate their nursing education and career.

To help students who may need direction and additional support throughout nursing school, MCN created the EMPOWER program. Empower stands for effective mentorship program organized to support the well-being of diverse students, encourage

community, and reinforce equity and inclusion. All MCN students are encouraged to take part in this mentorship program. The Empower coordinator identifies MCN alumni mentors and pairs them up with students who share similar nursing interests. One of those pairs is James Kramer, RN, and sophomore Aleks Sheridan.

Sheridan joined the Empower program when she was a freshman. Sheridan is a driven nursing student with a passion for caring for others.

"I've always known that nursing school was in my future," said Sheridan. "My mother faced health challenges, and I was always helping take care of her. I was exposed to nursing at a young age and knew that's what I was meant to do."



James Kramer '20 works as a public/community health nurse in Hanover Township.

Sheridan was originally interested in the Empower program for the academic mentorship. She excelled in high school, but knew college was going to be different. Microbiology was her first intimidating class; She'd never had to study like this before. Kramer gave her the

advice and resources she needed to succeed. Sheridan earned a 98% in Microbiology and credits Kramer's mentorship for the high grade.

Their relationship started with a phone call to get to know each other.

"Conversation just came easy, and we connected immediately," said Kramer. "When two people with a common passion for nursing connect, the conversation just flows."

Kramer received two degrees from Illinois State University and looks back fondly at his time at MCN.

"As I progressed in the nursing program, I found it much more than just a university," said Kramer. "It was building networks, my career, and more."

Kramer is a 2020 MCN graduate and a public/community health nurse in Hanover Township. He also works PRN as a hospice nurse. With plans to get his FNP, Kramer hopes to return to the Mennonite College of Nursing someday soon.

Kramer notes the wealth of knowledge provided by Dr. Teresa Novy, an instructional assistant professor, DNP, GERO-B.S., CNEcl, CWON during his time at MCN. Kramer knew he wanted the opportunity to give back one day and be a mentor to nursing students because of her guidance. He is still in contact with Novy and aims to be as impactful as she was to him.

"I still stay in touch with Teresa and strive one day to be as good a nurse as she is. I see nursing as a cycle. You receive this genuine mentorship at MCN, and now, it's my turn to give back," said Kramer.

A nursing career is about caring for others, but also building a supportive network of nurses and resources that can be leveraged throughout the profession. The Empower program is a first step in building that network of support. Mentors check in with students often to help with wellness and goal setting as well as to provide support, career advice, and networking opportunities. They inform the mentee of things they wish they'd known during their time in nursing school and offer insight into the nursing profession from their perspective as workers in the field.

"As a nurse, you get exposed to events and situations that are unnatural to the brain," said Kramer. "It's something that I'm comfortable with now, but as a nursing student, I wasn't. My goal as a mentor is to provide educational support, but also assist with some of the emotional damage that comes with nursing."

"I'm really grateful for how responsive James has been through this mentorship experience," said Sheridan.

"Even though he is busy with his career and life, he is always just a text or phone call away.

This has been an excellent experience, and I would advise all MCN students to take advantage of this program."

Sheridan plans to become an ICU, trauma, ER nurse because she thrives on adrenaline, but she also may find a home in pediatrics with her love of children. Sheridan is currently a sophomore and plans to get her master's degree.

If you have any questions regarding the Empower program, please contact mcninfo@IllinoisState.edu.



James Kramer '20 works as a nurse and enjoys mentoring MCN students like Aleks Sheridan.

CELEBRATING OUR *Award Winners*

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

BRIGITTE LAMAR, BSN '94



Brigitte Lamar is the 2023 recipient of the Mennonite Nurses Alumni Organization's Distinguished Alumni Award, the highest honor the college bestows upon graduates. She completed her BSN degree in 1994.

Lamar is the registered nurse care coordinator at the Community Health Care Clinic in Normal, which opened 29 years ago. It is the only free medical clinic in McLean County focused on improving care for the medically underserved. Approximately 1,200 adult patients are served annually.

Lamar works tirelessly to support patients with disease self-management at the clinic, which is the primary medical home for low-income and uninsured residents who slip through the cracks of the health care system.

She is equally appreciated for

her role in creating a unique opportunity at the clinic for MCN students. An excellent preceptor, she teaches nursing students how to practice within an integrated, team-based model alongside the clinic's primary care team.

Earlier in her career as a registered nurse, Lamar worked for the McLean County Center for Human Services. Her specialization was in providing psychiatric and mental health care.

Lamar delights in interacting directly with patients. She is dedicated to ensuring they receive quality care, understand physician instructions, and have access to the services they need to maintain optimal health.

EARLY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT ALUMNI AWARD

**CAITLYN BURTON-
GOWLER, BSN '21**



Caitlyn Burton-Gowler is this year's recipient of the Early Career Achievement Alumni Award. The award is presented to a graduate who completed their BSN within the past decade and demonstrated significant accomplishment and leadership.

Burton-Gowler graduated in 2021 with her undergraduate degree and will complete her MSN in 2023. Her graduate work has been in the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence. A registered nurse at Westminster Village in Bloomington, she was previously employed as a labor and delivery nurse at Advocate BroMenn Medical Center. She also worked as a nurse at Liberty Village of Clinton.

Compassionate and purposeful care are a trademark of Burton-Gowler's work, as she listens intently to patients and puts them at ease. The result is a connection that is critical between a patient and provider. These traits have been demonstrated consistently by Burton-Gowler as a nurse practitioner and during her assigned clinical settings as a MCN student.

Dedication and commitment also define Burton-Gowler, who provides community service to vulnerable individuals and advocates for their needs to be met. One way she does so is through her church's 12-step

recovery program. Even though she was completing classes as a full-time student and working part-time, she agreed to serve in the ministry that supports individuals who are struggling with life's hurts, hang-ups, and habits as they seek a safe place to find healing.

**MENNONITE NURSES
ALUMNI ORGANIZATION
SERVICE AWARD**

SANDRA VIRGIEL GIBBS '59



Sandra Virgiel Gibbs exemplifies the attributes of the Service Award, which celebrates exceptional service to Mennonite College of Nursing or to humanity in general. The 1959 graduate of the college makes it a priority to help others whenever and wherever she is needed, even as she cares for her husband who is facing health issues.

Gibbs is a dedicated alum who represents the college in numerous ways, including at the Light Up the Night event at OSF St. Joseph's Medical Center last year. She joined MCN faculty and staff to cheer, wave, sing, and thank hospital employees as they left or began their shift. She also partnered with staff and faculty to help the Student Nurses Association's Volunteer Night at the Midwest Food Bank.

From attending the college's Play4Kay reception and fundraiser to helping prepare nursing supplies

for local health care organizations, Gibbs is always willing to share her time to support MCN. Her efforts were recognized in 2022 with her being selected to participate in ISU's Founders Day Bell Ringing Ceremony.

Beyond her contributions of time and talent with the college, Gibbs has been a valued volunteer at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center as a patient advocate. She joined the program in 2019 and has devoted hundreds of hours listening and responding to patient's concerns and needs. Her level of commitment increased in 2020 when Gibbs joined the Patient/Family Advisory Council and began providing valuable input on hospital policies and practices.

All Gibbs does is perhaps best understood by the words of Mother Teresa, which she lives by: "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love."

**SPIRIT OF
NURSING AWARD**

ALIX GERRINGER, BSN '13



Alix Gerringer '13 is this year's honoree for the Mennonite College of Nursing's Spirit of Nursing Award. The award recognizes a graduate who embodies MCN's values in their personal life, career, or both. Gerringer has demonstrated those values as a nurse at Indiana

University Health Arnett Hospital and through a personal crisis.

Gerringer began her career in an inpatient surgical trauma unit. She joined IU Health in the Arnett Hospital resource pool before becoming coordinator of the department. Passionate about her work, she was known for her incredible empathy toward her patients.

Seven years after leaving campus, Gerringer's active life as a nurse, wife, and mom was significantly altered when she was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia. She developed septic shock and lost blood flow to her hands and feet, which were amputated in March 2020 in order to save her life.

Long-term care and rehabilitation meant Gerringer did not return home for nearly five months. She faced adjusting to a wheelchair and using other devices to regain independence while managing her Type 1 diabetes. Throughout the long recovery, she spoke of how she couldn't wait to get back to working as a nurse.

Less than a year after being discharged, Gerringer did indeed return to the same position at the Arnett Hospital where she worked before her illness. She has regained mobility using prosthetics for her legs, with efforts to be fitted for arms ongoing. She uses a touch screen computer and continues working with therapists to master completing simple tasks.

Gerringer uses her endurance to care for others as she continues her own recovery. She is an encouragement and inspiration to her family, friends, coworkers, and patients.



PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Foundations of wellness educational series at Mennonite College of Nursing

By Blake Sedbrook

As the demands on health care professionals continue to evolve, nurturing the well-being of nursing students has become a crucial undertaking for the Mennonite College of Nursing.

The college launched the Foundations of Wellness Educational Series in the 2022-23 academic year, providing students with a comprehensive program that addressed their physical and mental health needs. This groundbreaking initiative, developed and directed by Instructional Assistant Professor Dr. Valerie Wright and esteemed alum Maria Millen, has gained remarkable traction and positive participant feedback.

Driven by a vision to promote healthy habits among future nurses, Millen generously supported the creation of the Wellness Series.

“I was honored to underwrite the Wellness Academy as part of the Mennonite College of Nursing program. The semester-long class provided an opportunity for future nurses to explore a healthy lifestyle that may impact their daily personal and professional lives. Thanks to the support of the staff, including Dean Judy Neubrandner, Director of Development Jennifer Sedbrook, and Dr. Valerie Wright, for making a vision a reality,” Millen said.

Wright, a nurse since 1999, certified

yoga instructor and nutritionist, played a pivotal role in developing the program. Her passion for wellness, coupled with her expertise, aligned with the program’s objectives.

“Mennonite College of Nursing does a really good job teaching nurses how to care for others; this program teaches them how to care for themselves,” Wright said.

The Foundations of Wellness Educational Series encompasses a diverse range of workshops, including yoga, guided meditation, nutrition, and other holistic practices. These sessions aim to equip nursing students with essential

tools to navigate the challenges they may encounter in their personal and professional lives.

Wright said the program is focused on holistic wellness, ensuring students understand the importance of balance across multiple facets of their lives. The program was broken into multiple workshops for students to attend, each one focusing on a different aspect of wellness.

“We hosted a workshop called ‘Mastering your Morning,’ teaching students how to build good habits and start their days in a way that supports their overall well-being,” Wright said.

“If you can’t take care of yourself,” Wright said of the importance of self-care, especially for nurses, “you can’t take care of others.”

Another workshop introduced students to microgreens: nutrient-



Maria Millen

dense plants they learned to grow. By incorporating these greens into their meals, students discovered an easy, yet powerful way to enhance

their nutrition. Additionally, a cooking workshop dispelled the myth that healthy food cannot be delicious. The program culminated in a tour of Epiphany Farms Estate and a farm-to-table lunch, providing students with a tangible experience that synthesized all they had learned throughout the series.

“I absolutely loved the Epiphany Farms tour and meal,” student participant Kelsey Wells said. “It was so interesting to see exactly how all of the food gets to the plate. Seeing the tour of the kitchen and the methods the chefs use to reduce waste is amazing and should be practiced more. Also, getting to meet all the animals and eating a deliciously healthy meal made my week. I am going to use the information and knowledge from this experience to keep a healthy lifestyle and lower my risk for heart disease, which runs in my family.”

Testimonials from students underscore the impact of the Foundations of Wellness Educational Series.

“I had previously never been shown how to meditate or been guided through it, and with the help of this program, I have now been able to implement this into my life,” said participant Payton Kerper. “Learning how to make certain foods that both tasted great and were good for your health was also very eye-opening and helped me realize that many things can be made

with alternative, healthy ingredients and taste just as delicious.

“Along with learning what I did, I found these workshops so enjoyable, and a nice break from the rigor and stress of nursing school. These experiences gave me time to relax and focus on my own health and wellness,” Kerper said. “I highly encourage anyone who comes across this opportunity to take what you can from it.”

Brooklyn Crowley, another student who completed the program, lauded the wealth of knowledge gained from the series. “My experience with the wellness program was excellent. I learned so much about what foods are considered ‘healthy’ and what foods are not. I learned about how to grow my own nutrients and make meals that are nourishing for your mind and body... This program is a great way to start your wellness journey and educate yourself on ways to change your habits. I really enjoyed this program, and it is something that I would recommend to anyone.”

The Foundations of Wellness Educational Series at MCN is a testament to the college’s commitment to nurturing the holistic well-being of its nursing students. With the generous support of Millen and the guidance of Wright, this initiative empowers future nurses to prioritize self-care, ultimately leading them to fulfilling and resilient careers in health care.

Give a tax-deductible donation in support of the health and wellness program for our nursing students, which is funded by the generosity of alumni like you. Your gift will help to provide more wellness education and events for participating students as they learn healthy habits in preparation for their nursing career. Thank you for giving!





Kathy McDonald

A school nurse committed to serving the community

By Blake Sedbrook

Kathy McDonald is a passionate and dedicated school nurse at Downers Grove North High School. McDonald began her journey by enrolling in the school nurse certificate program at the Mennonite College of Nursing. In a recent interview, McDonald shared her motivation for pursuing a nurse certificate, her experiences during the program, and her aspirations as a school nurse. Her story showcases the impact of school nurses in promoting health and wellness within the school community.

McDonald's decision to pursue the school nurse certificate was driven by multiple factors. She wanted to be actively involved in Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for special education students, advocating for their needs during meetings. McDonald started out as a special needs nurse and recognized the pressing need for more certified nurses in her district, where only two nurses served a student population of 4,700. Additionally, McDonald saw this certificate program as a steppingstone toward a future master's degree. The program offered her an opportunity to dip her toes back into academia after being out of school for over 20 years.

The school nurse certificate program provided McDonald with a solid foundation for her role as a school nurse. Through a combination of group learning activities, interactive projects, and real-world implementation, she gained valuable insights and experiences from her instructors and peers. The emphasis on collaborative learning enabled McDonald to benefit from the collective expertise of fellow school nurses and instructors who shared their perspectives and practical knowledge. She particularly appreciated the program's focus on creating lesson plans and implementing them, a hands-on approach that enhanced her preparedness for the challenges ahead.

While McDonald found the coursework and program structure manageable, she faced personal challenges when she contracted COVID-19. However, she received great support from the instructors who accommodated her needs during her illness. She noted that thanks to their understanding, she was able to complete the program.

Reflecting on her time in the program, McDonald expressed her gratitude for the faculty's expertise, accessibility, and commitment to student success. She praised the program's materials, which provided comprehensive and up-to-date references, and applauded the reasonable cost compared to other institutions.

Once she completed the program, McDonald was almost immediately thrown into her position as a school nurse at Downers Grove North High School. McDonald was left to fill the position abruptly due to a coworker's leave of absence. Although it proved to be a tall task, McDonald was up to it. She cites the experience she gained during her time in the program as essential to helping her navigate her new position. McDonald completed numerous sample projects during the program and was provided with detailed feedback from the faculty. When she was thrust into the position, McDonald already had experience dealing with many of the required tasks of the job due to her experiences in the School Nurse Certificate Program.

McDonald's primary role involves responding to emergencies and providing guidance and support during crisis situations. She also plays a crucial role in educating the school community about various medical conditions that impact students' learning. School nurses act as advocates for students with special needs, ensuring their specific requirements are understood and accommodated.

As a practicing school nurse, McDonald faces the challenge of educating the school community about the scope of a school nurse's responsibilities. Often individuals may push for actions that are based on limited medical knowledge. Despite these challenges, McDonald derives immense satisfaction from supporting students and educating those in the community about health and wellness. Within the school community, school nurses are viewed as health experts, particularly in the absence of other medical professionals on campus.

McDonald's aspirations include assuming the role of a certified school nurse within her building, potentially succeeding her coworker upon her retirement. Additionally, she aims to expand her involvement in mental health advocacy, seeking to create a walking club that addresses the growing mental health challenges among students.

McDonald encourages aspiring school nurses to consider the Mennonite College of Nursing's program, emphasizing the critical shortage of certified school nurses and the abundant job opportunities available. The program's dedicated faculty, success in licensure exams, and affordability make it an excellent choice for those seeking a fulfilling career in school nursing. McDonald's positive experience and recommendation serve as a testament to the program's effectiveness and the transformative impact school nurses can have on the lives of students.



A LIFELONG PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Gina Crusor-Price's remarkable path to post-masters FNP certification

By Whitney Canterbury



Many nurses may worry that they are too old to return to college, but as Dr. Gina Crusor-Price illustrates, it's never too late to continue your education to fulfill your professional goals. At 67, Crusor-Price recently graduated from Mennonite College of Nursing's post-master's FNP certificate program, passing her boards with flying colors in June.

Crusor-Price graduated from nursing school in 1978 and worked in the neonatal ICU. She then graduated from CRNA school where she practiced from 1982-2012.

"I tried to retire, but honestly, I failed. If you are going to fail in anything in life, I encourage others to fail at retirement," Crusor-Price said. "It just wasn't really working for me."

Not one to sit still, Crusor-Price also earned a master's degree in pastoral counseling in 1996, as well as a Ph.D. in nursing science in 2010. After some soul searching, she again felt drawn to the role of an advanced practice nurse but sought to explore a different path than anesthesiology. While she has experience as a SANE and teaching graduate nursing courses at Olivet Nazarene University, her heart was in providing direct care to patients. She made the decision to acquire her Family Nurse Practitioner certification.

Crusor-Price was familiar with the Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) Traineeship Grant and researched schools that offered it. The Mennonite College of Nursing stood out among them. She was awarded five semesters from the grant with additional stipends each semester. Crusor-Price expressed gratitude to Dr. Jessica Sullivan, assistant professor and FNP program director, who provided support throughout her journey.

"Even months prior to my admission, Dr. Sullivan's responsiveness, warmth, and accommodation were invaluable. I had numerous and endless questions, and her assistance was a lifeline," Crusor-Price said.

MCN's reputation, including a 100% FNP pass rate and curriculum approved by AANP and AANC, cemented her decision.

Currently, Crusor-Price is practicing with a specialty group focusing on allergy, asthma and immunology. It was challenging to find an opportunity as most job postings want experienced practitioners. Still, most important to Crusor-Price is to remain connected with primary care practice as a volunteer practitioner. She remains passionate about providing quality health care to underserved populations, particularly in rural and correctional settings affected by poverty.

"If you are still at a place where you are active, your mind is clear, and you can still deliver quality care, then it's never too late to serve your purpose," Crusor-Price said. "I really hope my story can inspire others. I had an excellent relationship with my peers, one student even calls me 'mama.'"

"Retirement is often associated with a traditional mindset, but that definition isn't part of my vocabulary. I can still make a difference, so why should I stop? If I can do this, so can you. We were all created with a sense of purpose. You can retire and continue to be a blessing. Otherwise, life becomes mundane," Crusor-Price said.

We are incredibly proud of Crusor-Price and look forward to the lives she will positively impact on the health care horizon and patients she works with as a Family Nurse Practitioner.

Mennonite College of Nursing offers all degree levels to our alumni.

Mennonite College of Nursing is proud to offer a variety of graduate programs including:

BSN to MSN

- Family Nurse Practitioner Track
- Nursing Leadership and Management Track

BSN to DNP

- Family Nurse Practitioner Track

- Nursing Leadership and Management Track

BSN to Ph.D.

Post Master's Ph.D.

Post Master's DNP

Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate

Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Certificate

School Nurse Graduate Certificate



Get started today!



MCN SPRINGFIELD PROGRAM

PREPARES

FUTURE NURSES

BY JOHN TWORK

For years, Jenna Vortman '07 aspired to become a nurse. However, the prospect of balancing nursing school on top of working as a surgical technician seemed daunting for the 38-year-old mother of two.

But now, a partnership between the Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) and Memorial Health Springfield has created a path for Vortman and dozens of other transfer students to pursue their nursing dreams.

“I’ve hit a point where I want to be challenged a little bit more,” Vortman said. “I want to help as many people as I can. This program allows me to run with my passion. I never really thought I’d go back and get a second degree, but I’m very excited about this.”

Vortman and her classmates are in the first cohort of the newly launched MCN Springfield program, which is housed in a

modern, freshly renovated building near Springfield’s expansive medical district.

The two-year program is for full-time transfer students and follows MCN’s traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) plan of study, which has produced graduates who achieve a National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) pass rate average of 94.6% over the past five years. The national average was 82.3% in 2022.

Springfield students also practice skills in Memorial Health’s state-of-the-art nursing simulation environment and gain clinical experience within the Memorial Health network.

“Being part of this new venture for Illinois State and Memorial is really special,” said Vortman, a 2007 College of Education alum. “My education the first time with Illinois State was top notch. I enjoyed everything. This was fate, in some

ways—having a second opportunity to be at Illinois State.”

According to Dr. Judy Neubrander, dean of MCN, the idea to create a nursing education program in Springfield stemmed from a conversation about the “challenges and opportunities of health care” with Memorial Health Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Marsha Prater and Memorial Health CEO and President Edgar Curtis.

“Memorial Health had a demonstrated need for more nursing staff, while the Mennonite College of Nursing has been turning away many qualified students who dreamed of being nurses. So, why not work together to educate nurses in Springfield?” Neubrander said during the Springfield location’s August 18 ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“We are delighted and excited to launch this partnership with Memorial Health,” Neubrander



One of the theory classrooms in MCN’s new Springfield location.

continued. “Our joint vision of establishing a Springfield location for the Mennonite College of Nursing is a reality!”

Vortman, who also spoke at the ribbon-cutting event, proudly earned her first degree from Illinois State University in middle level teacher education. After starting out as a teacher, Vortman transitioned into the medical field 10 years ago. She began as a surgical technician in a Level I trauma center for Memorial Health, and since then, she has worked in several other facilities.

Vortman is a surgical technician with the Orthopedic Surgery Center of Illinois where she is responsible for maintaining a sterile field among other important duties.

“I adore the OR (operating room),” Vortman said. “It’s hands-on. You get to help fix people every day.”

While Vortman has a passion for the OR, she is eager to experience diverse clinical settings as a student within the large Memorial Health system.

“Orthopedics and surgery are my first love,” Vortman said. “But as I get other experiences, maybe there’s something out there that I’m not even thinking about that I’ll fall in love with. I just want to put some challenges under my belt and see where we go from there.”

Once she earns a BSN in 2025, Vortman sees herself returning to the Orthopedic Surgery Center of Illinois to become a “jack-of-all-trades” building nurse. Between now and then, she said her colleagues at the surgery center, along with her husband and their two sons, are her biggest fans.

“There’s no question, I feel extremely supported,” Vortman said.

By earning several scholarships, including an automatic \$500 annual scholarship from generous MCN donors Tom Carroll and the Estate of Jean Mattingly, Vortman also feels financially supported and empowered to focus on college, instead of work, over the next two years.

“Financial support is very helpful, especially having a family—you want to do this intelligently and not put a burden on your family,” Vortman said. “I appreciate the help because my new full-time job will be school.”

Although she’ll be focused on school, Vortman still plans to pick up occasional OR technician shifts during university breaks.

Along with the financial support she received, MCN Springfield’s proximity to Vortman’s home in Jacksonville—30 miles west of Springfield—was also a determining factor in her decision to enroll.

“It’s going to be great because my family life will still be sustained,” Vortman said. “I’ll be able to still be very present at home, which is really important to me.”

Based on her decade of health care experience, Vortman said it makes sense for MCN to have a Springfield location considering the first-class physicians and facilities located within Illinois’ capital city.

“Over the course of my time, working in Springfield within the health system, I’ve worked with many surgeons, fellows, residents, nurses—any aspect of health care you can imagine, and this is a hub,” Vortman said. “There are residents who come here because we are very well known. So, for us to be given a student opportunity in nursing here is going to be huge.”

While Vortman has loved serving as a surgical technician, she is excited to do her part to alleviate the nationwide nursing shortage.

“If you’re not challenging yourself as life goes on, what are you doing?” Vortman said. “Life’s about taking risks and having fun and enjoying what you’re doing. I think that’s really important.”

The Mennonite College of Nursing is deeply grateful to Kay Wilson ’84 for her generous support of clinical education needs for MCN Springfield.

“This creative partnership will help communities gain an increased number of highly trained nurses who are badly needed,” said Wilson.



Take a virtual tour of our new facility.



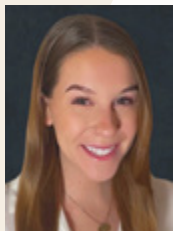
The Springfield commons area where students can study during breaks.



New COLLEAGUES

MURIEL BEAN

Muriel Bean is an academic recruiter focused on promoting the traditional BSN and the online RN to BSN program.



She collaborates with the marketing team to brainstorm effective recruitment

strategies, actively engages with exceptional potential nursing students, and advises prospective Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) students through the application process.

Bean graduated from Illinois State University in 2022 with a B.S. in advanced marketing analytics. She worked for a non-profit organization for a year after graduation before returning to her alma mater. Outside of work, Bean enjoys running on the local trails and spending time with her family.

WHITNEY CANTERBURY

Whitney Canterbury started her MCN journey as an academic recruiter primarily focused in Springfield. She has since been promoted to the director of marketing and recruitment for MCN. She works closely with key college personnel to develop comprehensive recruitment and marketing plans, brainstorm new recruitment strategies, explore new resources, and strategically market programs to recruit a top-



notch and diverse student body.

Canterbury graduated magna cum laude from the University of Southern Indiana

in 2011 with a B.S. in public relations and advertising. She has 13 years of marketing experience, nearly 10 of which were in the health care sector. Canterbury enjoys spending time with her husband Jared and children Camden, 7, and Olivia, 4.

DR. KIRSTEN CLERKIN

Dr. Kirsten Clerkin accepted the offer to join Mennonite College



of Nursing's (MCN) tenure track faculty in the fall of 2023.

Clerkin is an MCN alum, earning both her Master of Science in Nursing-FNP and her Doctorate of Nursing Practice at Illinois State.

Clerkin joined MCN in 2019 as non-tenure track faculty and has been educating nursing students with her skills and knowledge since. Clerkin is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society and currently leads the HPV Vaccine Quality Improvement Project at Western Illinois University's Beu Health Center.

DR. JUNG EUN KIM

Dr. Jung Eun Kim will be joining Mennonite College of Nursing's (MCN) tenure track faculty in the fall. Kim earned her Ph.D. from



Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California in 2022.

Kim has taught Traditional BSN, Accelerated RN-

BSN, and graduate-level nursing students. Her teaching experience began in Seoul, South Korea at Ewha Woman's University with the majority of her teaching taking place in California.

Besides teaching and providing nursing care as an RN, Kim has also held research positions where she collaborated with primary investigators preparing grant proposals and conducted nursing research at the University of California, Los Angeles' (UCLA) School of Nursing and CenExel Clinical Research Center respectively.

DR. JANET LOVERDE

Dr. Janet LoVerde will be joining Mennonite College of Nursing's (MCN) tenure track faculty in the fall. LoVerde earned her Ph.D. in 2019 from MCN.

Since graduating, LoVerde has been at Benedictine University as an adjunct assistant professor and program director of the RN to BSN program. She has taught Pathophysiology and Pharmacotherapeutics, Nurse Leadership, Health Promotion, Community Health Promotion, Applied Research, and more at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

LoVerde is a certified nurse educator and was selected to AACN Digital Academy in 2021. She was a member of the Essentials Committee for the National RN-Baccalaureate Faculty Forum and co-chair on

the Department of Nursing Curriculum Committee at Benedictine University.

She has collaborated on peer-reviewed publications and posters with several current and retired MCN faculty over the years. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society and the Illinois League for Nursing.

DR. TERESA NOVY

Dr. Teresa K. Novy '18 will be joining Mennonite College of Nursing's (MCN) tenure track faculty in the fall.

Novy has been faculty with MCN since 2009 when she took a part-time position as an instructional assistant. Over the years, Novy has been a sequence leader for plan 1 and accelerated students, a course leader, and in 2013 became a full-time instructional assistant professor.

Novy earned her BSN, MSN, and DNP (2018) from MCN. She has 20 years of experience as a nurse educator, is a Certified Nurse Educator Clinical Certified, CNEcl., and is certified in Wound Ostomy and Gerontological Nursing. In December 2022, Novy received the Nurse Educator Fellowship Award from the Illinois Board of Higher Education and a \$10,000 grant. Through Pearson Publishing in 2010, Novy authored *Basic skills for Nursing Assistance*.



BARBRA OLDENBURG

Barbra Oldenburg has been selected as Mennonite College of Nursing's (MCN) new academic advisor and



coordinator of student success and engagement. Oldenburg will continue in her previous role as assistant to both

Assistant Dean for Student Services Kileigh Guido and Associate Dean for Research Dr. Mary Dyck in the interim.

Oldenburg started with MCN in April of 2017 when she held the positions of prelicensure and post licensure for admissions and health and safety compliance consecutively before her role as administrative associate.

Oldenburg excelled in her roles at MCN. She enjoyed serving as the administrative associate to both Guido and Dyck. She now looks forward to working closely with MCN students in her advisor and student success role. As always, she is grateful to continue working with the MCN family of deans, faculty, staff, graduate assistants, and student workers.

RABEEA QAMAR

Rabeea Qamar has been selected as the new assistant to the associate dean for academics and assistant to the program directors.



Qamar came to the U.S. from Pakistan to further her education. She

received her master's degree in international business from the

University of South Carolina. Qamar brings valuable experience and familiarity with the variety of platforms necessary to excel in her role. She previously held positions in higher education.

She and her partner, an ISU alum and master's student, relocated to Bloomington and are enjoying the Midwest.

MATT RUTHERFORD

Matt Rutherford first came to Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) in February of 2016 as an IT support associate.



Over the years that Rutherford shared his expertise with faculty and staff in Edwards Hall, he was instrumental in supporting MCN's Nursing Simulation Lab.

Late in 2021, Rutherford decided to return to where his Illinois State career began: Student Affairs. There he took on the role of Student Affairs IT application analyst. Although MCN wished him well, he was missed immensely.

Rutherford returned to work alongside MCN February 13, 2023, and said he is "back home."

AMANDA SLEPICKA

Amanda Slepicka started her MCN journey as an instructional assistant professor of nursing at the new Springfield location. She enjoys teaching skills lab, NUR 222 Psychomotor Skills, and NUR 239 Pathophysiology &

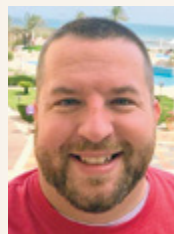


Pharmacotherapeutics Nursing. She is passionate about nursing education with a special interest in public health and pediatrics. She enjoys working with diverse groups of students to achieve their goals and help facilitate their career paths.

Slepicka graduated from Lincoln Land Community College in 2011 with her ADN RN, BSN in 2014, and Masters in Nursing Education from Chamberlain College of Nursing in 2020. She received her Masters Certificate in School Nursing from University of Illinois Chicago and Certified Nurse Educator in 2021. She has a wide variety of nursing experience from med-surgical, geriatrics, and pediatrics to teaching CNA programs and as an adjunct professor in clinicals. Slepicka enjoys running and spending time with her partner Mike and four children, Kayla, Quinn, Maddie, and Elsa.

CLINT SMITH

Clint Smith, M.S. '23, joined Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) on August 16, 2023, as the site administrator of our Springfield location.



Smith has expansive knowledge in higher education spanning across housing, facilities, admissions, advising, orientation, and leadership. He joins MCN with 17 years of higher education experience, with 11 of those years spent at Illinois State University. Smith was the 2022 recipient of the Herb Sanders Award for Outstanding Academic Advising, Illinois State's

highest honor for advisors on campus. He was a member of the Academic Advisor Council in 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022, and he was voted as chairperson for the committee in 2019 and 2022.

Smith is a 2004 graduate of Lincoln College and an August 2023 graduate of Illinois State University with a Master of Science in technology, sequences in training and development, and sequences in project management. He loves hanging out with his nephews, gaming, going to concerts, and watching the Kansas City Chiefs.

ROBIN TROST

Robin Trost is an instructional assistant professor teaching Adult Nurs-



ing I Theory and clinicals. Before coming to Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN), Trost did traveling work in South Dakota and New Mexico, working in family practice and later returned to her home state of Wyoming to do urgent care. Her vast experience is critical in preparing future nurses at MCN for their professional careers.

Trost graduated in 2015 from Illinois State University and became a board-certified nurse practitioner. Trost has a continuous passion for teaching and eventually returned to MCN to start her career as a professor. In her free time, Trost enjoys travelling, spending time with her four children, and exploring her genealogy.

ASHLEY TURNER

Ashley Turner has been selected as the new office support specialist in the Office of Student Services.



Turner has a background in service and banking, with specialized training in customer service. Turner lives in Decatur

with her husband Kevin and two-year-old son Gunnar.

She will serve as the main receptionist for the college and will assist with textbook and desk copy coordination, FERPA form/CNA form/and CPET collection via mcninfo@IllinoisState.edu, and with NCLEX licensing processes.

Turner started at MCN on March 13, 2023. She is located in Edwards Hall, room 112D.

KYLER UMMEL

Kyler Ummel has been selected as MCN's assistant director of business and finance. Ummel started with



MCN November 22, 2022, serving as post-licensure instructional coordinator and academic advisor. Ummel excelled

in this role and looks forward to his new position within MCN.

Ummel is originally from Lexington but attended junior high, high school, and college on ISU's campus. He expects to complete his Master of Science in applied economics in December 2023 and previously earned his Master of Science in business education (2021) and his Bachelor of Science in manage-

rial economics and general finance (2019). He has worked as a master tutor at Heartland Community College since 2016, and previously served as a research assistant for ISU's Economics Department and a credit analyst for Heartland Bank. Ummel is an avid golfer who enjoys playing basketball, going for runs and walks, and attending sporting events with his friends and family.

SHAWNA WALSH

Shawna Walsh has been selected as the new office administrator for compliance and admissions at Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN).



Walsh comes to MCN from county government employment. Walsh is interested in helping MCN students become excellent

nurses. She is originally from the small town of Delavan but moved to Bloomington about 16 years ago.

JENNIFER WALSTON

Jennifer Walston is a dedicated and accomplished professional who joined MCN in August 2023 as an instructional assistant professor. Her extensive background in nursing and health care education makes her a valuable addition to our team.



Walston holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, which she earned from OSF College of Nursing in 2005. She began her career as a dedicated bedside nurse in the Intensive Care Unit, amassing a decade of hands-on experience in critical care.

In 2014, Walston achieved a significant milestone by graduating from the University of Illinois Chicago with a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree. With this advanced education, she transitioned into the role of an Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, where she excelled for nine years before becoming part of our institution.

Walston's dedication to her profession is matched by her commitment to her family and community. She resides in Chatham, and when she's not contributing to the field of nursing and education, she enjoys quality time with her loved ones, particularly chasing her kids around.

HEATHER WIEGAND

Heather Wiegand is an instructional assistant professor. She has been an ICU/critical care nurse, house supervisor, and travel nurse, and has now chosen the Mennonite Col-



lege of Nursing (MCN) for the next step in her career. She previously taught as adjunct faculty for Richland Community College and enjoyed helping nurses prepare for their future.

Wiegand lives on a small farm in west Decatur with her husband and four children while her fifth and oldest has his own house. At home, she and her family have horses, cows, goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, and numerous cats and dogs. She loves to read, cook, and watch movies and enjoys perennial gardening.

Nursing, service, and beyond

Unveiling the remarkable story of Tiffany Maravilla

By Whitney Canterbury

For those who don't know Tiffany Maravilla, she may seem like a typical college student. However, upon spending time with her, Maravilla quickly stands out as an



extraordinary individual; one who is committed to giving back to her country all its given to her.

Maravilla's schedule is nothing short of demanding. She's proven her commitment to serving others as a dedicated nursing student, but even more so by being involved in the Army ROTC program and the Illinois Army National Guard. As part of the Army ROTC, Maravilla starts her day with physical training every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 6-7:20 a.m., except for

when she has clinicals. Thursdays bring early morning lab sessions from 6-8 a.m. with further nursing responsibilities. Her commitment to the Illinois Army National Guard involves one weekend per month and two weeks in the summer where training consists of classroom instruction and field training exercises.

Maravilla has found being involved in a medical services unit of the Illinois Army National Guard beneficial in her nursing studies.

"Balancing all these obligations—ROTC, Army National Guard, and a rigorous nursing program—was initially challenging," Maravilla said. "But as I grew more comfortable, I developed a routine and became highly effective in time management."

As the child of Filipino immigrant parents, both of whom are nurses, Maravilla felt a calling to join the military. She wanted to give back to the country that gave her family the opportunity to build a life here. Maravilla opted for the Army Reserves.

"I picked the Reserves so I can still pursue a career in the civilian sector," said Maravilla. "My goal is to have

a balance between my civilian and military careers."

Maravilla will be a part of the Army Reserves as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps in Colorado.

"I love the outdoors and all the diverse outdoor activities available like mountain biking, snowboarding, snowshoeing, rock climbing, and more," Maravilla said.

Maravilla has accepted a position in the ICU at the VA in Colorado. She aspires to eventually be on a critical care team in the military as a flight nurse. In her civilian career, she intends to further her education as an Advanced Practice Nurse in family practice or anesthesiology. Her mother, a constant source of inspiration, is currently enrolled in a Family Nurse Practitioner program and is set to graduate in September 2023.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Maravilla for her service to our country and for proudly representing the Mennonite College of Nursing. Her remarkable commitment and achievements leave no doubt that she will continue to inspire us all. Maravilla, it is alumni like you who make us Redbird Proud!

JUSTIN SO EARNNS FIREbird GRANT



MCN's Justin So was one of three Illinois State University spring 2023 FIREbird research grant award recipients. The FIREbird program engages undergraduate students in intensive, faculty-mentored research they might not otherwise pursue due to time constraints, the need for research supplies, or not having access to research materials. So was awarded the grant for his work on the research study, “Leveraging Children’s Oral and Gut Microbiomes” with faculty mentor Dr. Susana Calderon.

Name: Justin So

Hometown: Mundelein, Illinois

Employment: Medical/surgical units at RUSH Medical Center in Chicago

Summary of research: I was presented the opportunity to work on two different research projects with Dr. Susana Calderon (assistant professor at Mennonite College of Nursing). One was related to the use of a yogurt intervention in a pediatric population and the ways it affected their oral and gut microbiomes. The other researched how vaping affects oral microbiomes in college students.

For the yogurt intervention study, we developed a systematic review to see how effective a yogurt intervention was in various pediatric populations through research articles we found. This review will hopefully be published this fall.

For the vaping study, I was given the opportunity to work in a laboratory to identify the difference in DNA/RNA between our control and students who vaped.

What is your biggest takeaway from this experience: My biggest takeaway from this project is to take any opportunity that comes your way; and to build connections with the professors, faculty, and clinical instructors that you work with throughout college. If I had never done the independent study, and if I never really connected with Professor Calderon, I would have missed this great opportunity to research something that could help guide care for nurses who work with the patient population we researched.

What’s Next for Justin: I plan to continue gaining experience as a nurse at RUSH. I would like to eventually end up in the ER or ICU, whether that be with adults or in pediatrics. Additionally, I have aspirations to go back to school for my Ph.D. or DNP.



Kaitlyn Donovan

Balancing nursing and gymnastics with grace

By Blake Sedbrook

Senior Kaitlyn Donovan is a nursing student in the Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) at Illinois State University and a gymnastics student-athlete. Somehow balancing the two, Donovan's story follows her pursuit of excellence in both realms, the hurdles she's had to face, and the invaluable connections she's formed along the way.

Hailing from the small town of South Lyon, Michigan, Donovan's journey to Illinois State began with an invitation to join the University's gymnastics team. During her visit, she immediately felt a sense of belonging and a strong bond with the gymnastics family. However, Donovan initially had a different career path in mind. Intent on majoring in biology and pursuing a career in medicine, her aspirations took an unexpected turn during her senior year of high school.

The tragic passing of a close friend profoundly affected her and sparked a shift in her perspective and career goals. Donovan found her calling in nursing, recognizing the immense impact health care professionals can have on the patients they serve. With a newfound purpose and eagerness to make a difference in the lives of others, she embarked on her nursing journey at MCN.

Donovan has discovered a community that embraces collaboration and support at MCN. During intense periods like finals week, she describes how students come together to study, offering assistance and creating an environment where everyone benefits from each other's knowledge and experiences. This spirit of cooperation is a testament to their shared goal of becoming future nurses, supporting and uplifting one another as they prepare to take their skills across the country.

On the gymnastics front, Donovan emphasizes the importance of teamwork in achieving success. Each member brings unique strengths and weaknesses and relies on one another to fill in gaps. The team broke a long-standing school record and won the conference championship through collaboration and mutual support, an accomplishment that exemplifies their dedication and unity.



Donovan battled through multiple injuries during her gymnastics career at ISU but never lost sight of her goals. She describes the pain of sitting on the sidelines watching her teammates compete, but ultimately settled into a leadership role, ensuring that although she was injured, she could still contribute toward the team's success. She'd built bonds with her teammates by the time she'd recovered and was able to compete.

In addition to her demanding schedule as a nursing student and gymnast, Donovan goes above and beyond to make a difference in her community. Alongside MCN assistant professor Dr. Susie Watkins, she provides essential health screenings at the local homeless shelter Home Sweet Home, ensuring those who can't afford or lack access to health care receive it. Donovan's commitment to improving the well-being of others shines as she dedicates time to addressing the health care needs of the underserved.

Donovan is also minoring in Spanish and using it to make a difference. Donovan contributes to a research study led by MCN Assistant Professor Dr. John Blakeman. The study investigates patient understanding of cardiovascular health, heart attack symptoms, and cardiovascular diseases. Donovan has been instrumental in the success of this research by using her knowledge of Spanish to communicate with patients at the Community Health Care Clinic when other nurses are unable to. This personal care exemplifies what it means to be a nurse.

Donovan's journey as a nursing student, gymnast, and volunteer is a testament to her remarkable resilience, adaptability, and passion. Balancing the demands of nursing education and the rigors of gymnastics requires exceptional discipline. Donovan's experiences at MCN have shaped her into a compassionate and exceptional future nurse. Her partnership with classmates and teammates demonstrates the power of unity and the potential for greatness when individuals come together to pursue a shared vision.

HIGHLIGHT



FACULTY

A passionate pursuit

Dr. Teresa Novy's journey as a nursing educator

By Blake Sedbrook

A nurse aspires to be passionate, devoted, dependable, empathetic, and most of all, caring. Dr. Teresa Novy (DNP, GERO-BC, CNEcl, CWON) is a Mennonite College of Nursing faculty member who exemplifies each of these traits to the fullest. Her virtue stands out in the classroom as she guides her students to their bright futures; and through her work with patients, where she provides unmatched care and compassion.

Growing up as the daughter of a preacher, Novy moved frequently with her family until they settled in the small town of Flanagan during her teenage years. It was during this time that her father, an administrator at a nursing home, introduced her to the world of health care. At just 16 years old, he encouraged her to become a certified nursing assistant at the nursing home, recognizing her passion for working with patients. Novy worked that

Novy's journey stands as an inspiring example of dedication, adaptability, and a genuine passion for nursing education.

summer to receive her CNA and began work at the nursing home. She enjoyed her role there but was still figuring out what to pursue as a career. She knew that she had a passion for caring for others, but also wanted to be a teacher, noting her extroverted personality and fondness for public speaking.

Novy's educational journey took her to Lincoln Christian College and later to Illinois State University. Although she enjoyed her time in college, she initially felt something was missing. Novy discovered her true calling when she worked as a CNA during a brief hiatus from academia. The experience rekindled her passion for nursing, leading her to pursue an LPN degree at Heartland Community College. She worked six years as an LPN after earning her degree.

Though she was passionate about long-term care and the elderly, Novy knew she wanted to advance her career through higher education. She aspired to take her education a step further and earn her master's degree. As her personal life and family grew, Novy sought a position that offered more flexible hours, which led to a weekend charge nurse role at the hospital. Novy embarked on her journey to pursue a master's degree, which ultimately paved the way for her career at Mennonite College of Nursing, earning this degree in 2009. She quickly adapted and worked for eight years in the hospital and part-time at MCN, proving her versatility as a nurse.

Novy's dive into teaching marked a new chapter in her nursing journey, where her natural aptitude for connecting with others shines. Joining Mennonite College of Nursing as a full-time faculty member in 2013, she initially assisted with assessment labs and skills classes. Her dedication and expertise soon led her to take on the role of course lead for the skills class, a position she held for a decade. Throughout her

teaching career, Novy continuously sought opportunities to evolve and grow as an educator. Now, with her recent achievement of a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) in 2018, Novy is more determined than ever to utilize her knowledge and experience to foster innovative approaches to nursing education at the Mennonite College of Nursing.



Novy also recognizes the importance of pushing her students and challenging them during their studies. Her teaching style centers around striking a delicate balance between accountability and unwavering support for her students. As a nursing faculty member, she understands the importance of holding her students to high standards and instilling in them a sense of responsibility and commitment to their academic journey.

Looking forward, Dr. Teresa Novy has accepted our offer and will be joining Mennonite College of Nursing's tenure track faculty in the fall. She aims to teach new classes in search of a fresh challenge.

Her contributions to the Mennonite College of Nursing have left a lasting impact on students and colleagues alike. As she looks toward her future endeavors, Novy's commitment to excellence and compassionate teaching methods promises a bright future for nursing education at the Mennonite College of Nursing.



ALUMNI

Scott Schaefer '17

By Blake Sedbrook

Scott Schaefer '17, a Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) alum, is an inspiration to aspiring nurses. Schaefer worked as a simulation lab “labbie” during his time here and was a proud member of the ISU Xi Pi chapter of Sigma.

Schaefer’s journey took an exciting turn during his senior year when he embarked on a ride-along with an air ambulance. This experience sparked a passion in Schaefer to become a flight nurse.

After graduating, Schaefer began his six-year career as an ER nurse in Normal. His dedication and expertise led him to serve as the department educator for the emergency department for two years. He enjoyed his time there, but he dreamt of taking to the skies once again.

In April 2023, Schaefer’s dream became a reality as he joined the Air Evac Lifeteam in Macomb as a flight

nurse. Having completed intensive ground training, he now transports patients by air, ensuring they receive the highest level of critical care. As a flight nurse, Schaefer thrives on the opportunity to provide essential care to patients in rural areas, delivering them swiftly to definitive care centers.

Schaefer’s journey is a testament to the incredible possibilities within the nursing profession and its ability to make a difference even outside a traditional hospital setting.



Do you have any success stories that you would like to share? We would love to hear from you! Email us today at mcninfo@IllinoisState.edu.



Dr. Valerie Wright launches **COLLABORATE**

Dr. Valerie Wright, an esteemed faculty member of the Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN), has launched Collaborate: an innovative new card game that teaches aspiring nurses the importance of interprofessional teamwork. Wright worked with Matt Rutherford and Ashley Bollhorst to bring the project to life, with a goal of creating a way for students to learn while they are having fun.

Collaborate is more than just a game: it's a strategic learning experience. By immersing players in diverse patient scenarios and challenging them to assemble the optimal team of health care professionals, the game teaches students to develop crucial skills in prioritization and collective decision making. Collaborate is perfect for students in the health care profession who are looking to hone their knowledge while having a great time. The Mennonite College of Nursing congratulates Wright for her outstanding achievement and contribution to shaping the future of nursing education.



Jovanna Johnson

Bridging the gap between education and health in Chicago Public Schools

By Blake Sedbrook

In the bustling hallways of Chicago Public Schools, Jovanna Johnson stands out as a skilled school nurse, committed to transforming the lives of students and their families. Her journey to provide comprehensive care to the community she serves is nothing short of inspiring.

Through her completion of the School Nurse Certificate program at Illinois State University's Mennonite College of Nursing, Johnson has found a way to bring health care and compassion to countless kids under her care. Johnson shared with us some of her experiences, challenges, and aspirations, and shed light on the critical role school nurses play in shaping the well-being of a community.

"I've always been passionate about helping others live a happier and healthier lifestyle," said Johnson, who began her nursing journey with a goal to help others.

After completing her nursing degree, she immediately joined Chicago Public Schools, allowing her to work with children and serve as a positive role model. She knew that this would be the perfect opportunity for her to make a lasting impact. However, she soon realized that working as a school nurse required specialized knowledge and skills beyond what she had learned in nursing school.

The challenges of working in Chicago Public Schools, coupled with the desire to provide the best care possible, led Johnson to pursue further education. She enrolled in the Mennonite College of Nursing's School Nurse Certificate program. Johnson shared how the program not only deepened her knowledge but also broadened her perspective on the profession.

"A lot of people think that school nurses just provide first aid care and give kids Band-Aids. It's so much more than that...I understand the importance of my role in the community and letting them know that we care for them and that we're here for them. And helping to bridge the gap between education and health within the school system."

The program's comprehensive curriculum provided her with the necessary tools to navigate the unique landscape of school nursing, where the well-being of students is directly correlated with their academic success.

During her time in the program, Johnson had the opportunity to complete practical hours alongside an experienced preceptor who had been a school nurse for over 25 years. This experience allowed her to witness the importance of school nursing and gain insights into the nuances of the profession. Johnson learned to approach each student as a unique individual, understanding tailored care is essential to meet their diverse needs effectively. The program emphasized the importance of collaboration between nurses, educators, families, and the community to create a supportive and healthy school environment.

Johnson's journey as a school nurse has been filled with both rewarding moments and challenges. One of her most memorable experiences was helping a student newly diagnosed with diabetes navigate the challenges of managing his condition. Through her partnership with the student's endocrinologist and nutritionist, Johnson provided the necessary support and education to guide the student and their family. Witnessing the positive impact she had on the student's health and well-being validated her decision to pursue school nursing and reinforced her dedication to making a difference in the lives of students.

"Helping the student adjust to this new life changing diagnosis, I think that was the most rewarding experience for me."

Johnson also acknowledged the challenges inherent to the field. She highlighted the shortage of nurses and limited resources as ongoing obstacles schools face. Due to the shortages, Johnson began her career by being assigned to three schools at once. Juggling responsibilities across multiple schools, each with its unique needs, proved to be a demanding task and left Johnson feeling stretched thin. However, she persevered and provided the best care she could. She has now been assigned to one school and has been able to focus on serving that community to the best of her abilities.

Johnson envisions herself continuing to create healthier and happier school environments. She strives to foster collaboration and understanding between nurses and educators, breaking down any perceived barriers between the two professions. Johnson recognizes the crucial role school nurses play in advocating for students' health and well-being, and she aims to elevate the importance of their contributions within the educational system. Furthermore, her experiences have sparked an interest in pediatric behavioral health, and she has been considering pursuing further specialization as a psych nurse practitioner to address the growing mental health challenges faced by students.

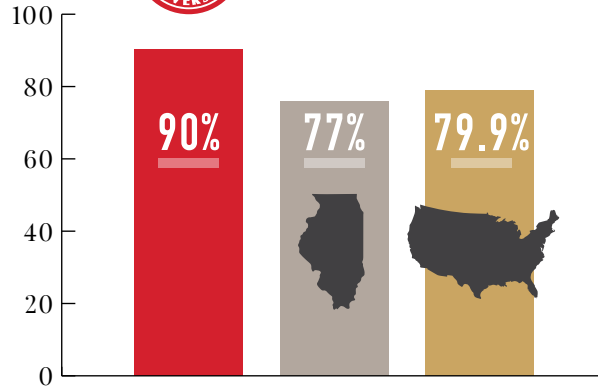
Johnson's passion for school nursing and dedication to the profession shine brightly. Her journey exemplifies the transformative power of education and the impact of skilled school nurses. The School Nurse Certificate program at Illinois State University's Mennonite College of Nursing equips future school nurses with the knowledge, skills, and compassion necessary to navigate the unique challenges of the field. By nurturing caregivers like Johnson, the program ensures that students receive the highest level of care, fostering their well-being and academic success.

MCN facts and figures



PASS RATES

MCN's NCLEX pass rate is consistently high. Our 2022 pass rate was 90% and our five-year pass rate is 94.6%.

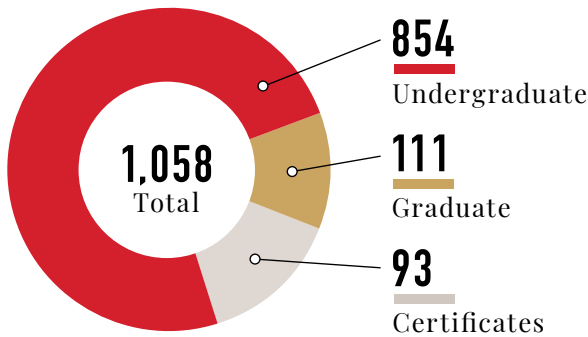


NCLEX Pass Rates

100%

FNP Certification Exam Pass Rate

FALL 2023 ENROLLED STUDENTS



FALL 2023 LARGEST FRESHMAN CLASS ENROLLED



FALL 2023 FRESHMEN STATS

4.08

Average GPA for enrolled freshmen

STUDENT SCHOLARS

16

Presidential Scholars in the nursing major
Since 2018

7

University Scholars in the nursing major
Since 2018

\$1.25M
IN GRANT FUNDING

\$2.1M
IN GIFTS & PLEDGES

Faculty and staff awards and honors



John R. Blakeman
Assistant Professor

- Clinical Article of the Year Award, American Heart Association Council on Cardiovascular and Stroke Nursing. (2023)
- Research Initiative Award, Illinois State University. (2023).
- Scientific Merit Award (for poster at MCN's Annual Scholarship Symposium), Mennonite College of Nursing. (April 2023)



Mary J. Dyck
Professor

- Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing, National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence. (October 19, 2022)



Dr. Denise Hammer
Assistant Professor

- Full Graduate Faculty Member/Status, Illinois State University. (April 18, 2023)



Teresa K. Novy
Assistant Professor

- Nurse Educator Fellowship, Illinois Boards of Higher Education. (December 7, 2022)



Patricia L. Pence
Assistant Professor

- Outstanding College Teacher Award, Mennonite College of Nursing. (May 5, 2023)

- Midwest Nursing Research Society Nursing Education RIIG Mid-Career Investigator Award, Midwest Nursing Research Society. (January 2023)



Clint M. Smith
MCN-Springfield Administrator

- Herb Sanders Award for Outstanding Academic Advising, ISU - Academic Advising Council. (2022)



Susie M. Watkins
Assistant Professor

- Service Initiative Award, Illinois State University. (February 23, 2023)

Contracts, Grants, and Sponsored Research

Theresa A. Adelman-Mullally
Assistant Professor

Grant

Hammer, D. (Co-Principal), Novy, T. (Co-Principal), Adelman- Mullally, T. (Co-Principal), "Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Clinical Model versus Traditional Clinical Model for Accelerated Bachelors

Nurses," Sponsored by Sigma Theta Tau International Epsilon, Epsilon Chapter Research Grant, Other, \$500.00. (May 2023 - September 2023)

Adelman- Mullally, T. (Co-Principal), Hammer, D. (Co-Principal), Novy, T. (Co-Principal), "Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Clinical Model versus Traditional Clinical Model for Accelerated Bachelors Nurses," Sponsored

by Sigma Theta Tau International, XI PI Chapter, Other, \$1,761.00. (April 2023 - September 2023)

John R. Blakeman

Assistant Professor

Grant

Blakeman, J. R. (Principal), Eckhardt, A. L. (Co-Principal), Kim, M. J. (Co-Principal), "A cross-sectional, descriptive study of the lay public's conception of the term chest pain," Sponsored by University Research Grant, Illinois State University, \$3,540.00. (July 2022 - June 2023)

Susana J. Calderon

Assistant Professor

Grant

Calderon, S. (Principal), "Feasibility of children yogurt intervention and oral and gut microbiomes," Sponsored by The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), Federal, \$11,485.70. (September 22, 2022 - December 31, 2023)

Denise L. Hammer

Assistant Professor

Grant

Hammer, D. (Co-Principal), Novy, T. (Co-Principal), Adelman- Mullally, T. (Co-Principal), "Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Clinical Model versus Traditional Clinical Model for Accelerated Bachelors Nurses," Sponsored by Sigma Theta Tau International Epsilon, Epsilon Chapter Research Grant, Other, \$500.00. (May 2023 - September 2023)

Adelman- Mullally, T. (Co-Principal), Hammer, D. (Co-Principal), Novy, T. (Co-Principal), "Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Clinical Model versus Traditional Clinical Model for Accelerated Bachelors Nurses," Sponsored by Sigma Theta Tau International, XI PI Chapter, Other, \$1,761.00. (April 2023 - September 2023)

Hammer, D. (Principal), "University Research Grant Research Development Award," Sponsored by Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State, Illinois State University, \$750.00. (June 2021 - September 2022)

Myoung Jin Kim

Professor

Grant

Blakeman, J. R. (Principal), Eckhardt, A. L. (Co-Principal), Kim, M. J. (Co-Principal), "A cross-sectional, descriptive

study of the lay public's conception of the term chest pain," Sponsored by University Research Grant, Illinois State University, \$3,540.00. (July 2022 - June 2023)

Teresa K. Novy

Assistant Professor

Grant

Hammer, D. (Co-Principal), Novy, T. (Co-Principal), Adelman- Mullally, T. (Co-Principal), "Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Clinical Model versus Traditional Clinical Model for Accelerated Bachelors Nurses," Sponsored by Sigma Theta Tau International Epsilon, Epsilon Chapter Research Grant, Other, \$500.00. (May 2023 - September 2023)

Adelman- Mullally, T. (Co-Principal), Hammer, D. (Co-Principal), Novy, T. (Co-Principal), "Impact of a Dedicated Education Unit Clinical Model versus Traditional Clinical Model for Accelerated Bachelors Nurses," Sponsored by Sigma Theta Tau International, XI PI Chapter, Other, \$1,761.00. (April 2023 - September 2023)

Patricia, L. Pence

Assistant Professor

Fellowship

Pence, P. L., "Summer Research Fellowship Grant," Sponsored by Mennonite College of Nursing, Illinois State University, \$2,000.00. (May 2022 - August 2022)

Grant

Pence, P., "SoTL University Research Grant," Sponsored by Illinois State University, Illinois State University, \$2,500.00. (October 19, 2022 - 2023)

Michele D. Shropshire

Assistant Professor

Grant

Shropshire, M. (Principal), Şengün, S. (Co-Principal), "Gamification: A Learning Tool in Gerontological Nursing Education," Sponsored by Illinois State University, Illinois State University, \$3,879.00. (January 17, 2023 - 2024)

Jessica M. Sullivan

Assistant Professor

Grant

Sullivan, J. (Principal), "Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) Grant," Sponsored by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Federal, \$2,800,000.00. (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2023)

Dean's Cabinet



KEVIN CONLON
 Founder and President,
 Conlon Public Strategies



LARRY H. DIETZ
 President Emeritus, ISU's
 19th President (2014-21)



BEVERLY GRIMES
 2022-25, 1960 Mennonite
 School of Nursing



BILL LAWRENCE
 2022-24, Petrov Lawrence
 Reed (P/L/R) Insurance



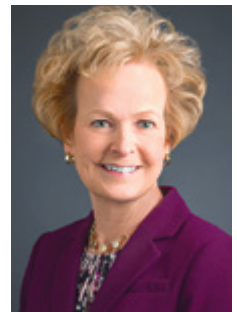
KAREN MAGERS
 RN 2022-24, 1979
 Mennonite College of
 Nursing, RN, Bloomington
 Eye Institute



SCOTT MORGAN, M.D.
 Urologist in Bloomington
 and Lincoln



AMY O'BRIEN
 MCN Alumna; MSN '15;
 BSN '09, Instructional
 Assistant Professor at MCN



MARSHA PRATER
 Ph.D., RN, NEA-BC,
 FACHE, Memorial Health,
 Chief Nursing Officer
 Emeritus



LAURIE ROUND
 RN, MS, BSN, NEA-BC
 2022-24, Chief Nurse
 Executive and Vice President
 of Patient Services, Carle
 BroMenn Medical Center,
 Carle Eureka Hospital, Carle
 West Physician Group



STEVE SMITH
 (Convener) 2022-25, CEO,
 Association Management
 Center, Two-time alum
 (B.S. '89, M.S. '93)



STEVE TIMMERMANN
 2022-24, Vice President of
 Lending, Bank of Pontiac,
 B.S. '88



KATHY YODER
 MCN Alumna, BSN '96
 and FNP MSN '05;
 McLean County Coroner

Cabinet members not pictured.

Dee Miller

CEO, The Linq Up; Donor


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