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HONORING OUR PROFESSION
STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS
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cura*personalis*

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing

2025

Welcome to the 2025 edition of Cura Personalis magazine, from the Saint Louis University Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing.

In this issue, we highlight the successes of our alumni, the talent and resilience of our students, stories of connection and accomplishment from our faculty, and our commitment to looking forward – understanding the demands of the market, anticipating the needs of our students and delivering the resources they need to thrive as health care professionals in today’s world.

As we commit to educating the next generation of nurses, we recognize the importance of strong, mutually supportive partnerships. In 2024, we revitalized our partnership with SSM Health, our Grand Boulevard neighbors, to strengthen our mission of educating the whole person – mind, body and spirit – within a diverse and technological society. Through this dynamic partnership, we hope to positively impact the education, practice, service and scholarship endeavors of our students and faculty.

THIS PAST YEAR, WE ALSO...

- Revamped and revitalized the undergraduate nursing curriculum to align with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing competency-based standards, at the same time that we are implementing the University Core Curriculum.
- Continued to have the highest pass rates for state nursing board exams in the region.
- Received a grant from the Missouri State Board of Nursing to support technological innovation in instruction, including using iPads in the classroom.
- Received a grant from the Missouri State Board of Nursing to support the education of RN-BSN students.

This is the third year in a row that our clinical preceptors have been recognized for the great work they are doing with the Preceptor of the Year Award.

In 2025, our graduate faculty continue to work hard to innovate and align their curriculum with the market, while working on new recruitment strategies. We are in our fourth year of implementing our new faculty scholarly expectations and focusing on our research priorities and skills.

I am so proud of what we accomplished in 2024, excited and hopeful about what 2025 is already bringing and pleased to highlight so many important topics in this issue. Each day, I am impressed by the commitment of faculty, students and alumni to the nursing profession, and I hope you will find inspiration in their stories too.

Sincerely,

KRISTINE L’ECUYER, PH.D., RN, CNL, CNE
Interim Dean and Associate Professor
Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing



Table of Contents

PAGE 4	ADDRESSING NURSING WORKFORCE NEEDS WITH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS: Three ways SLU is staying competitive in 2025
PAGE 6	AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS: Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing Faculty Ph.D.s
PAGE 8	ALUMNI MERIT AWARDS: Honoring Judy Carlson (2023 award winner) and Trudy Busch Valentine (2024 award winner)
PAGE 10	BRINGING BEDSIDE PERSPECTIVE TO THE EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD: A profile of SSM oncology nurse Anita Mueller
PAGE 12	THE CIRCLE OF ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP: Celebrating the connection between the recipient of the Patricia and James R. Hemak Endowed Professorship and its namesake
PAGE 15	2024 FACULTY AWARDS AND HONORS
PAGE 16	RETIREMENTS
PAGE 19	THE MOST FLEXIBLE MASTER’S DEGREE ON THE PLANET: Exploring the School of Nursing’s MSN-CNL program
PAGE 20	STUDENT STORIES
PAGE 23	IN MEMORIAM

ON THE COVER: SARAH JANE
HORNBERGER, TBSN, CLASS OF 2026

ADDRESSING NURSING WORKFORCE NEEDS WITH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

In a demanding and fast-moving market, nursing schools across the country are competing for top talent – and students are contending for in-demand preceptorship and career opportunities.

This year, leadership at Saint Louis University's Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing, supported by the school's new strategic initiatives and the hard work of its faculty, is focused on addressing these evolving market needs, helping students find new ways to get in the door and on to a successful career.

"To provide the highest quality care, nursing programs must evolve alongside the ever-changing health care landscape, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of today's diverse patient populations and complex health care needs," Michelle Papachrisanthou, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, said. Papachrisanthou is Associate Professor of Nursing, Associate Dean for Graduate Nursing Education, Director of Advanced Practice Nursing Programs and coordinator for the Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Program.

"This includes offering scholarship support, preceptor placement assistance and graduate recruitment resources, all of which are essential in fostering the next generation of skilled SLU nurse practitioners," she said.

THREE WAYS THE TRUDY BUSCH VALENTINE SCHOOL OF NURSING IS ADDRESSING MARKET NEEDS:

1. NEW SCHOLARSHIP OFFERINGS

In 2024, school leadership worked closely with Saint Louis University Associate Provost Eric Armbricht, Ph.D., to develop a scholarship designed to support nursing students seeking to earn a Master of Science in Nursing-Nurse Practitioner degree, students earning a doctoral degree, and students enrolled in the School's BSN to DNP program.

The new scholarship, known as the President's Scholarship, is awarded after admission and provides new nurse practitioner students with \$10,000 toward their SLU education. The school is working on promoting the scholarship to prospective students and has already seen an increase in program enrollment.

2. MORE ROBUST PRECEPTOR SUPPORT

Connecting School of Nursing students with the right preceptor is a vital step in their education and an essential part of helping students make connections between what they've learned in the classroom and real-world application. The demand for quality preceptorships is high, and School of Nursing leadership has placed a renewed focus on ensuring students find the right mentor and environment for their needs and career goals.

This year, Associate Professor Margaret Benz, MSN(R), APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, became the School of Nursing's Preceptor Placement Coordinator. Benz has extensive experience working with students and preceptors, and now she's able to channel her valuable insight and connections across the nursing community into matching SLU students all over the country with the right preceptor. She also does the important work of keeping in touch with students and preceptors, ensuring the experience is going well for everyone involved.

"She's doing a phenomenal job," said Papachrisanthou. "It's a point of pressure for every nursing student to find a preceptorship, so Margaret's role is a much-appreciated position."

3. EXPANDED GRADUATE RECRUITMENT

In 2024, School of Nursing leadership hired Andy King as the school's first designated director of graduate recruitment and admissions. King is focused on growing and attracting top talent to graduate nursing programs by expanding the school's networks, exploring new recruitment platforms and strategies, and addressing any barriers to the application process.

GOING FORWARD

According to Papachrisanthou, these initiatives are just the beginning of an ongoing and evolving effort to ensure SLU remains competitive in the nursing marketplace and attractive to students looking for top programs and career opportunities.

There are plans in development that would give BSN students the chance to take graduate electives, as well as an exploration of potential partnerships within the University to offer nursing students dual degrees. A combined MSN-NP and MBA is just one example.

"There are so many different things we can do to partner with all of our colleagues here," Papachristanthou said. "You put these opportunities together, and you end up with very marketable graduates."



AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing Faculty Ph.D.s

The School of Nursing saw four of its faculty members receive their doctoral degrees in 2024, with topics ranging from palliative care and post-pandemic health care to school nursing and the experience of graduates from Jesuit nursing schools.

KAREN S. MOORE, PH.D., DNP, APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-C, CGNC, FAANP, FAAN

*Professor, Director of DNP Programs,
Coordinator of Global and Planetary Health*

Dissertation: “Utilization of Palliative Supportive Care Services in Hispanic and Black Communities: The Impact of Foundational Causes of Disparities on End-of-Life Choices”

Moore’s work was informed by studies she conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a scoping review of the impact of COVID-19 on the Hispanic population and a qualitative study on understanding the cultural values, beliefs and perceptions about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccination in the Mexican American community.



DEBORAH HORTON, PH.D., RN, MPH, PHNA-BC

Associate Professor, RN-BSN Program Coordinator

Dissertation: “School Nurses and Administrators’ Perceptions of School Preparedness: A Focused Ethnography”

Horton interviewed 24 administrators and nurses from K-12 public schools to explore and understand the unique culture of school disaster preparedness. Her research revealed that disasters have a major impact on all areas of school life and can be lessened or increased depending on the level of leadership, collaboration and support. It also demonstrated that school culture has an impact on preparedness – school nurses were leaders during the pandemic, and most are involved in school disaster preparedness. Horton concluded that understanding the impact of disasters through a cultural lens will help focus future improvements in school disaster preparedness.



SHELLEY VON DER LANCKEN, PH.D., M.S.N.

Assistant Professor

Dissertation: “The Transition to Practice Experience in a Post-pandemic Health Care Environment for Gen Z Nursing Graduates”

Von Der Lancken’s phenomenological study seeks to understand the lived experience of the transition for recent baccalaureate graduates. Her research explores the transition to practice experience for Gen Z baccalaureate nursing graduates in a post-pandemic health care environment. She interviewed 10 May 2023 graduates about their transition to professional practice. Participants included diversity in both geography and clinical environments.



CRISTINA MCGROARTY, PH.D., RN

Associate Professor, Level II Undergraduate Coordinator

Dissertation: “The Lived Experience of Jesuit Baccalaureate Nursing School Graduates Meaning-Making in their Professional Practice”

McGroarty interviewed 10 nurses who attended three different Jesuit nursing schools. Four themes, taught to the graduates at their respective schools, emerged from her interviews: the importance of the care of the whole person (the whole patient and the whole nurse), the importance of community, the diversity of experiences that Jesuit education offers and the importance of a reflective practice.



2023 ALUMNI MERIT AWARD: JUDITH CARLSON, BSN, RN, MSN (’72)

When Judith Carlson graduated from the Master of Science in Nursing Program in 1972, she didn’t waste any time returning to her *alma mater* – ready to impart the same thoughtful wisdom and Jesuit values she had received from her own SLU nursing instructors.

Carlson earned her undergraduate degree in nursing in Ohio before coming to SLU, where she earned her master’s degree in gerontological and medical-surgical nursing. From there, she joined the school as a nursing instructor in 1973. Over the years, she had a hand in guiding and inspiring more than 6,000 students in classes across the school’s programs – from undergraduate medical-surgical nursing to graduate courses, including pharmacology and pathophysiology.

She taught full time until 2014 and then worked as an adjunct professor at the School of Nursing before officially retiring in 2022. Carlson’s nearly 50 years of leadership earned her the love and respect of faculty, students, families and the broader medical community. She has been the recipient of many awards, including the Saint Louis University School of Nursing Teaching Excellence Award, the Saint Louis University Women’s Commission Woman of the Year Award, the Spirit of the Billiken Mentor Award and *St. Louis Magazine’s* Excellence in Nursing Educator Award.

At the 2024 School of Nursing pre-commencement ceremony, Geralyn Meyer, assistant professor, celebrated Carlson’s dedication to her profession and the values of the University.

“Judy’s commitment to teaching was equally matched by her strong service record within the school, the University and the professional community,” Meyer said. “She exemplifies the Jesuit mission of service to others and for the greater good.”

In 2023, Carlson received another notable award: SLU’s Alumni Merit Award, which is given each year to distinguished graduates in recognition of their outstanding achievement, dedication to a chosen profession and commitment to the mission of the University. She was surprised – and honored.

“It was very humbling,” Carlson said. “It’s always nice to be recognized for making contributions to the education of young nurses. It makes you feel very good.”

While Carlson has retired, she remains a presence on campus – cheering on the Billikens, volunteering in the Nursing Skills Lab and continuing to connect with faculty and students. When she was asked to give the school’s pre-commencement remarks in 2024, she encouraged students to honor their own legacy and choose the most meaningful path, and she made sure to recognize the Jesuit education that set her career at SLU in motion.

“Envision the kind of world you want to live in, and do all you can to make your dream a reality,” Carlson said in her speech. “You are armed with so much knowledge and the benefit of a Jesuit education that gives you all the tools you’ll need to lead a very successful, fulfilling life.”



2024 ALUMNI MERIT AWARD: TRUDY BUSCH VALENTINE, VSN (’80)

For SLU alumni around the world, “cura personalis” isn’t an abstract concept – it’s a source of inspiration and guidance that lasts long after graduation. For alumni Trudy Busch Valentine (VSN ’80), “care for the whole person” is the common thread in the fabric of a compassionate life.

In May 2024, at a ceremony held during Saint Louis University’s Commencement Recognition Dinner, Valentine was honored with the School of Nursing’s 2024 Alumni Merit Award. The award recognized her decades of work in health care, education, advocacy and pastoral care – all of which reflect the values and meaning behind a SLU education.

Valentine earned a bachelor’s of science in nursing from Saint Louis University and a master’s in pastoral care from Aquinas Institute of Theology.

“My SLU education formed the basis for my beliefs in life – in the dignity of all people, the respect I have for everyone, and in understanding the human condition,” Valentine said. “I love that it’s an education based on the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of people. That is more important now than ever before.”

Over the years, she has gained a personal understanding of suffering and the need for service, support and empathy. Valentine lost her husband John suddenly in 2002, and she walked beside her son Matt through his challenges with substance abuse before his death in 2020. Since then, she has become a strong advocate for raising awareness, reducing stigma and supporting those impacted by substance abuse disorders and mental health conditions.

“Every loss has made me go on and do more for others,” she said. “It’s given me more compassion, more understanding and more love.”

Valentine’s involvement in community service touches not only on the well-being of others but also on the community and world around her. In 2018, she helped to organize a climate summit based on Pope Francis’s 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*. She has also served on numerous boards, including SLU’s Board of Trustees since 2017.

“Trudy is an advocate for nursing, but also for the entire University and its overall mission,” said Jane Baum, Senior Advisor, Strategic Philanthropy, at SLU. Baum has worked closely with Valentine since 2016, and she has seen firsthand her care for the University and the School of Nursing. “She will embed herself any way she can – talking with the students,

listening to their challenges and successes. She especially loves to stop in and hand out cookies or bagels, just to bring a smile. Whatever she can do to be present.”

Valentine’s support for the advancement of SLU’s educational offerings can be seen throughout the University, and especially in the School of Nursing. In 2010, she endowed a lecture series for School of Nursing students, faculty, staff and health care workers across the area.

In 2019, Valentine donated to support the excellence of faculty and staff in the School of Nursing. That year, the school was named in her honor – a testament to her profound commitment to fostering excellence and advancement within the University and the broader health care community.

“I think the lens of nursing is enormous. Nurses have eyes on the world. And SLU sends out incredible graduates,” Valentine said.

Her advice to nursing graduates – the students she supports and encourages through her gifts and her presence on campus – is to think broadly about the positive impact they can have through their profession.

“You can be more and do more than you ever thought you could, so keep your mind open. You have a deeper understanding of life and the human condition than most because you are directly involved in caring for people,” she said. “The world needs nurses.”





MUELLER RECEIVES THE DAISY
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

BRINGING BEDSIDE PERSPECTIVE TO THE EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

The Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing runs on the vision of its leadership, the expertise of its faculty, the talent of its students, the generosity of donors – and the insight of its Executive Advisory Board. Founded in 2000, the Executive Advisory Board was put in place to propose new actions and activities for the betterment of the School of Nursing, from hiring to fundraising.

Over the years, the Board has been made up of leaders in the nursing community, many of them nursing professors and alumni who have a deep understanding and direct connection to the inner workings and needs of the profession. But in 2017, School of Nursing Executive Advisory Board members realized that an essential voice was missing from the Board: a member who is actively working as a nurse and can bring the unique perspective that comes with being at the bedside, day in and day out.

And they knew of the perfect person to fill the role: Anita Mueller.

Mueller's invaluable perspective comes from her longtime role as an oncology nurse at SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital – and a journey that began more than 40 years ago.

After earning her RN from Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing in 1981, Mueller knew she didn't want to procrastinate when it came to getting her bachelor's in nursing. She started working at Saint Louis University Hospital that same year and began working toward her BSN, going to classes at SLU during the day and then heading straight to an eight-hour shift.

Her calling is – and has always been – oncology. When asked why she chose that path, Mueller explained the fortuitous moment that led to her vocation.

"Actually, it chose me. It just so happened the oncology manager called me. They had a position open, and I needed a job," she said. "I really enjoy it. I enjoy the patients. They're there to get better, and they do whatever they can to get better. It's been so rewarding to see the positive patient outcomes."

Over the years, Mueller has seen the field of oncology grow and evolve. New medicines and treatments have been developed, and patients are living much longer, fuller lives.

"Now we have lots more to offer – and the medications we have are much more effective," she said. "Quality of life during treatment is so much better."

When Teri Murray, School of Nursing professor and dean emeritus, approached Mueller about joining the Executive Advisory Board seven years ago, explaining that the Board was seeking an active bedside nurse to join their team of alumni and professors, Mueller was honored, and she went in with an open mind.

"The Board is all about the school and what they can do to make it better," she said. "When they add new members, they're trying to gather more diverse backgrounds."

Mueller brings not only her perspective as a longtime bedside nurse but also as someone who regularly interacts with students, helping orient them to the hospital and teaching them essential skills, like how to make a hospital bed.

She has been able to offer the Executive Advisory Board, which meets three times per year, unique insight into the new changes and challenges nurses face, including adapting to the influx of traveling nurses who entered the field during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through her time on the Board and her years as an oncology nurse, Mueller has had a profound impact on her colleagues, patients and peers.

"I had the privilege of working with Anita beginning in 1984 on the oncology floor at Saint Louis University Hospital," Suzanne Mahon, Professor, Emeritus, Department of Internal Medicine, said. "Early in her career, she manifested excellence. She is kind and compassionate and has never become complacent in understanding the complexities of oncology care."

Mahon understands the significance of Mueller's lasting commitment to her field of expertise – and the value it provides patients, families and nursing students.

"Very few nurses spend an entire career on the same unit providing bedside care. Anita educates and supports patients and families, she is an excellent preceptor and role model for the next generation of nurses, and she generously contributes to the SON Executive Advisory Board," Mahon said. "There are few nurses that have this legacy."

The recognition Mueller has received for her work isn't limited to her role on the Executive Advisory Board. In 2022, she received the DAISY Lifetime Achievement Award for extraordinary nursing. The national award recognizes nurses who have devoted their lives and careers to the compassionate care of others. Mueller was nominated by one of her fellow nurses.

She was honored in a surprise ceremony by colleagues past and present, new and old friends – including her roommates from nursing school, family members who had flown in from all over the country, and her mother, who is also a nurse.

The award and her role on the board are well-deserved achievements in a career spanning more than four decades. Mueller is planning to retire this spring to travel and spend more time with family, and she finds gratitude and inspiration in the lives of her patients.

"Every day is a gift. That's why I've liked oncology. These patients are so grateful," she said. "You just need to live life to the fullest. Plan ahead but take each day one at a time."



THE CIRCLE OF ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP

Celebrating the Connection Between the Recipient of the Patricia and James R. Hemak Endowed Professorship and Its Namesake



HEMAK



CÔTÉ-ARSENAULT (LEFT) AND HEMAK IN MINNESOTA IN 2023

The Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing is built on strong connections – between faculty and students, between nurses and patients, and between alumni and donors who inspire top instructors to bring their talent and research to SLU through endowed professorships.

School of Nursing Professor Denise Côté-Arsenault, Ph.D., is a maternity nurse, professor and researcher who focuses on parent experiences with pregnancy loss.

Côté-Arsenault chose her career path through a combination of professional interest and personal loss. Her journey to SLU is a story of connection, compassion for expectant parents, and a shared passion for educating new generations of nurses.

“I’ve been a researcher for 30 years,” Côté-Arsenault said. “Currently, my research is with parents who continue with pregnancies knowing or having learned that their unborn baby has a life-limiting condition and will have a very brief life.”

The goal of her research is to improve care for those patients, in part because at one time, she was a patient herself. Côté-Arsenault lost a baby when she was 20 weeks pregnant – an event that adds a deeply personal element to her professional pursuits. But even before her loss, as a new nurse, she wasn’t afraid to be with her patients during life’s most difficult moments.

“I had always been drawn to working with patients who were dying,” she said. “And when I began working in labor and delivery, I was drawn to patients whose babies had died.”

Driven by empathy and the desire to improve the experiences of these patients, Côté-Arsenault received her master’s degree in childbearing family nursing in 1985, followed by her doctoral degree in nursing in 1995.

“When I went to get my Ph.D., I was already working in the perinatal loss arena and facilitating loss groups and those kinds of things, but I needed a research topic,” she said. “I had many options, but I found that pregnancy loss fit with my interest in pregnancy, theory and end-of-life care.”

Côté-Arsenault discovered that there was very little existing research on the topic of pregnancies after pregnancy loss. This glaring gap made her more determined to make it her focus.

“It was just so obvious,” Côté-Arsenault said. “It was like, ‘Oh, I get to focus on pregnancy and loss, which are my loves,’ and it’s been my passion ever since.”

In the years that followed, Côté-Arsenault dove headfirst into her research, publishing papers and books and contributing to texts on subjects including perinatal palliative care, supporting grieving families and pregnancy after loss.

And then, in 2019, Côté-Arsenault was recruited by the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing. The school sought to support her research through the Patricia and James R. Hemak Endowed Professorship in Maternal Child Health, the School of Nursing’s first named professorship dedicated to advancing research regarding the care of mothers and infants.

Côté-Arsenault accepted, honored to continue her research at SLU and eager to learn more about Patricia Hemak, the namesake behind her professorship.

Over the past five years, Côté-Arsenault has forged a friendship with Hemak, updating her on her research and connecting whenever possible. In 2022, the two women were able to meet in person when Hemak, who lives in Minnesota, came to St. Louis for SLU’s Homecoming and Family Weekend. And in 2023, Côté-Arsenault traveled to Minnesota to visit Hemak and learn more about her life, her career and what inspired Hemak and her husband, James, to create their endowed professorship.



CÔTÉ-ARSENAULT

A PASSION FOR NURSING FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

Patricia Hemak came from humble beginnings. Born in St. Louis, she attended Catholic school throughout her childhood and adolescence. Caring for others came naturally to her, and she knew her calling early on.

“At 12, she knew she wanted to be a nurse,” Côté-Arsenault said.

When Hemak graduated from Bishop DuBourg High School in 1960, her next step was to decide where she’d go to nursing school. At the time, most nursing schools were run by hospitals, but Saint Louis University offered a different path and a more traditional learning environment. SLU’s School of Nursing also offered full scholarships, a benefit that was not lost on Hemak and her family.

After passing the school’s scholarship exam, she was awarded a four-year scholarship, plus a \$500-a-year stipend through the March of Dimes.

During her time at the school and throughout her clinical experiences in low-income parts of the city, Hemak found all her nursing instructors to be supportive and patient. Many of them had attended SLU and stayed or had come back to teach. But her junior-year maternity instructor, Sr. Caritas, stood out to her for reasons that would forever influence her career.

In the 1960s, maternity care, especially care for the mothers of stillborn babies, was clinical and impersonal. Most mothers were never given the chance to see their babies after birth, but Sr. Caritas took a different approach.

“Sr. Caritas allowed parents to see and spend time with their stillborn babies, which was unheard of at the time,” Hemak said. “There were no sonograms then, so when babies had abnormalities, parents didn’t know until they were born. She let parents see and hold their baby and reassured them that it was nothing they had done.”

During her senior year, Hemak had the opportunity to help teach a parenting class led by Sr. Caritas and witnessed the instructor’s revolutionary approach to educating future parents.

“She was a visionary. She brought fathers into her class and provided a level of care that was way ahead of her time,” Hemak said. “At that point, I knew I wanted to do what those instructors were doing. I had gotten unbelievable mentoring.”

After graduating from the School of Nursing in 1964, Hemak knew she wanted to travel. Inspired by a trip she’d taken with her mother, her first stop was Hawaii, where she spent the next year working in a maternity ward.

“Pat wanted to see the world and travel,”
Côté-Arsenault said. “Nursing was her ticket.”

Inspired by Sr. Caritas, Hemak worked to implement small but meaningful changes at Queens Hospital in Honolulu, like teaching mothers breathing exercises, and she immersed herself in a new culture.

“I look back and think, ‘Boy, was I ever blessed,’”
Hemak said. “As a white woman, I was a minority
there. It could be easy to feel like an outsider, but the
head nurse of our unit was like a mother to everyone.”

After working in Hawaii, she returned to St. Louis to work at what was then Jewish Hospital of St. Louis. She was the first Catholic nurse the hospital had hired and once again discovered an opportunity to broaden her horizons through a new environment. From there, she moved to San Francisco, where she earned her master’s degree in maternal and child nursing.

Hemak then taught at Southern Illinois University before returning to SLU to teach. At her *alma mater*, she continued to put into practice the more personal and compassionate approach to nursing her instructors had taught her, understanding that she could positively influence the way her students cared for their patients for years to come.

In 1975, Hemak met her husband, James, and the couple moved to Seattle, where she was hired as Swedish Hospital’s first clinical specialist in family care and maternity services. In her role, she set up a training program for nurses teaching childbirth classes. The couple moved to Colorado in 1981 and then to Minnesota to be closer to James’ family.

Through it all, Hemak never stopped learning, working and teaching, drawing on the care and compassion she learned from her SLU School of Nursing instructors, and sharing that approach with a new generation of nurses.

In 2016, the Hemaks decided to turn an inspiring SLU experience into an ongoing legacy by establishing the Patricia and James R. Hemak Endowed Professorship in Maternal Child Health. Their vision was to take the passion for maternal-neonatal nursing Hemak found at SLU and expand it, empowering nursing educators and researchers to continue to innovate in the area of maternal-fetal health and beyond.

WHERE ENDOWED SUPPORT MEETS MUCH-NEEDED WORK

Côté-Arsenault is the second faculty member to hold the endowed professorship. Since coming to SLU in 2019, she has taught in the nursing doctoral program and continues to advance her research

in pregnancy loss and infant death, pregnancy after perinatal loss, and continuing pregnancy with life-limiting fetal conditions.

Her efforts to meet and get to know Hemak have resulted in a personal and professional connection rooted in a mutual appreciation for the power of a nursing teacher’s positive influence.

“What Pat learned from Sr. Caritas, she applied
throughout her career,” Côté-Arsenault said.
“I’ve always felt that being an educator, you have
tremendous influence over what your students
learn from you and how they apply it.”

In turn, Hemak sees in Côté-Arsenault the realization of her vision for the endowed professorship.

“With [Côté-Arsenault’s] advanced degrees and her
expertise, which is a difficult subject to research,
she is a wonderful fit,” Hemak said. “There is such
a need for her work.”



CÔTÉ-ARSENAULT AND HEMAK MEET IN PERSON FOR THE FIRST TIME AT SLU’S HOMECOMING WEEKEND, SEPTEMBER 2022

2024 FACULTY AWARDS AND HONORS

ELAINE YOUNG, DNP RN, ACNS-BC, CV-BC Assistant Professor 2024 St. Louis Magazine “Excellence in Nursing” Educator Award

With over 24 years of teaching experience, Young teaches Complex Care theory courses for seniors in the School of Nursing’s traditional BSN program. She designed and implemented a critical thinking sheet for students to describe the pathophysiology of complex disease concepts and identify assessment data supporting that diagnosis, the treatment plan and nursing interventions. Young’s favorite part of her role as an educator is the relationships that form between the student and the instructor.

SETH BLAND, MSN, CNL Instructor Saint Louis University Graduate Student Association, 2024 Mentor of the Year

Each year, SLU’s Graduate Student Association gives the Mentor of the Year Award to a professor who has inspired and enhanced students’ graduate education. Bland, who graduated from SLU’s Accelerated Master of Science in Nursing program and is now an instructor, was nominated because of the exceptional mentor-student relationships he has established during his short time teaching at the School of Nursing.

CRISTINA MCGROARTY, PH.D., RN Assistant Professor Saint Louis University Student Government Association, Faculty Excellence Award, 2024

The SLU Student Government Association’s Faculty Excellence Award is one of the highest honors given by the University. McGroarty was nominated for the award by two nursing students from the class of 2025 for her unwavering commitment to her students, her innovative teaching methods and her mentorship, which has had a significant and lasting impact on the School of Nursing community and beyond.

VERNA HENDRICKS-FERGUSON, PH.D., RN, FPCN, FAAN Professor; Irene Riddle Endowed Chair 2024 Oncology Nursing Society Distinguished Nurse Researcher Award

Hendricks-Ferguson, whose research includes palliative and end-of-life communication practices by health care providers, received the 2024 Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Distinguished Nurse Researcher Award at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes the contributions of ONS members who conduct or promote research that enhances the science and practice of oncology nursing.

JOAN HRUBETZ, PH.D. Former Dean Collinsville School District Hall of Fame

Hrubetz, who served as a longtime School of Nursing professor as well as the first lay dean of the school from 1982 until 2004, was honored last year with a posthumous induction into the Collinsville School District’s Hall of Fame. A Collinsville High School graduate and SLU alumna, Hrubetz passed away in 2008. She is remembered for her strength, warmth, wisdom and leadership.

RETIREMENTS

JOANNE LANGAN, PH.D., RN, CNE: *A legacy of leadership, resourcefulness and inspiration for a new generation of nurses*

Nursing and education run in Joanne Langan's family: two of her four older sisters became teachers and two became nurses. When it came time for Langan to choose, she decided to give teaching a try and worked as a substitute teacher for five years, but she couldn't ignore the feeling that she was called to nursing.

At the time, her husband was active-duty Navy, so the couple moved around frequently. Langan went back to school for nursing in Mississippi, and practiced nursing on the West Coast, the East Coast, the Gulf Coast, and finally, in the Midwest.

She earned her MSN and Ph.D. in nursing administration from George Mason University, where she taught from 1994 to 2000 before interviewing at SLU. The idea of returning to her hometown to teach was exciting, and SLU immediately felt like home.

"I fell in love with SLU from the very beginning," Langan said. "It's that Jesuit, Catholic environment. I could feel it from day one."

Langan spent her first two years at SLU as an adjunct professor, but she wasn't ready to give up bedside nursing. She continued to practice bedside nursing through 2010 – a role that enhanced her teaching and gave her important perspective on her role as both a nurse and educator.

In 2003, she and four other representatives from the University were given the opportunity to visit Israel and learn about disaster preparedness training. The 10-day trip inspired Langan and her fellow nurses to turn their passion for disaster preparedness and their knowledge into a tool for future nurses. Their first disaster textbook was published in 2005, and Langan's second was published in 2023.

During her 24 years as a full-time faculty member at SLU, Langan was associate dean for six years. In 2014, she applied for a grant that facilitated the first-ever white coat ceremony for nursing students – a tradition that has continued every year since.

"My goal was to always get a speaker who could speak to the care they've received from a nurse," Langan said. "The goal is to make the message clear to sophomore-level nursing students: 'You're valued, and what you're doing is very important work.'"

She also served as the president of SLU's Faculty Senate – the first nurse to hold the role – during a tumultuous time at the University. It was a challenging role, but she was encouraged by the support of the SLU community.

"I was proud of the fact that I was supported on many levels for my decisions as president," Langan said. "That was a great opportunity."

Beyond her leadership roles, Langan's legacy includes securing grants that have covered the tuition of many SLU nursing school students, as well as grants that have facilitated collaboration with other universities, allowing them to stream select SLU nursing classes and expand the school's reach.

Langan's 2024 retirement has given her the opportunity to reflect on the place and the people who helped shape her career.

"The environment at SLU School of Nursing is inviting, comforting and nurturing. It permeates among the students, staff, faculty and administrators. There's a general feeling of respect, dignity for everyone and inclusiveness," she said. "I'm grateful that I've had the opportunity to foster that through my teaching and my administrative work."

And while her full-time role has come to an end, Langan is still very much a part of SLU School of Nursing. As of July 1, 2024, she is faculty emerita, continuing to guide her students through their Ph.D. and DNP projects and teaching the disaster preparedness course.

She's passionate about being an educator, and she isn't ready to give up being a nurse. As she tells her students, "It's the hardest job you'll ever love."



RETIREMENTS

GERRIE MEYER, PH.D., RN, CNE: *A career dedicated to the art of teaching – and the success of SLU School of Nursing's most trailblazing programs*

Looking back on her 33 years at Saint Louis University's Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing, Gerrie Meyer is grateful for every experience, but teaching will always be her primary passion.

"My first love is teaching," Meyer said. "I love to teach."

Before coming to SLU, Meyer worked as a gerontological nurse. She joined the University in 1991 when the School of Nursing hired several new adjunct faculty members to support an influx of students to its Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing (ABSN) program. In 1994, she took the first of several leadership positions when she was promoted to ABSN coordinator, a role she held for the next 16 years.

Over the years, she saw the program – the first of its kind in Missouri – grow some years and struggle other years. Through it all, she stayed committed to helping its students, many of whom were seeking a new career after layoffs or life changes, make the transition to nursing.

In 2009, when school leadership expressed interest in developing an accelerated master's program to meet a growing need for dynamic nurse leaders, Meyer was asked to chair the task force that developed the Accelerated Master of Science in Nursing – Clinical Nurse Leader program.

"We got permission to start the program in 2010. As an inaugural faculty member, I got to see the first cohort go through," Meyer said.

With more nurses working longer shifts for fewer days a week, hospitals were seeing less continuity of care. The new CNL graduates acted as overseers of processes and procedures – nurses who follow a patient's experience all the way through their stay.

"We have attending doctors. A CNL is like an attending nurse. It's an exciting role," Meyer said. "Teaching them, you really get a sense of what gets them inspired about nursing and what good nursing looks like."

In 2013, Meyer transitioned to a coordinating role for SLU's traditional nursing program. Altogether, she worked as a program coordinator at the University for 20 years – and she continued to teach the entire time, leading at least one clinical a year.

"One of the reasons I was so insistent on teaching is that, for me, it's a lot easier to coordinate when you are also teaching," Meyer said. "It's important for students to see you as a coordinator, a teacher and a nurse. It's important that they see you as someone they can talk to."

In 2017, Meyer decided to go back to her role as a full-time faculty member.

"I'm a teacher at heart," she said.

Soon after, she began taking steps toward phased retirement and fully retired from teaching in June 2024.

"The School of Nursing holds such a big piece of my heart," Meyer said. "I love having that Jesuit mission – Jesuit spirituality is such a good fit with nursing. They work so well together."

And while she'll miss the classroom and the bedside, Meyer is looking forward to the flexibility of retirement, the opportunity to spend more time with her 13 grandchildren and the chance to reflect on a long career at a school she loves.

"If I've taken any of the passion I have for nursing and paid it forward for the next generation of nurses, then it's all been worthwhile."



RETIREMENTS

LISA ROACH: *An essential staff member celebrates a 37-year career*

Lisa Roach's career at Saint Louis University hasn't been linear – but it has always been fulfilling. Roach's first position at SLU was in the University's Budget Office, where she started in 1987. Seven years later, a new opportunity presented itself: the chance to utilize her expertise as a financial coordinator at the School of Nursing.

“When I had the opportunity to go to the School of Nursing, I couldn't pass it up,” she said. “It was a different climate than I was used to, and that was interesting to me.”

Roach remained in the position until her fourth child was born in 1999, at which point she decided to take a break from the workforce. It was a tough decision, but it made the most sense for her family.

Two years later, the financial coordinator position at the School of Nursing was open once again, and Roach was ready to return. Not long after, she was promoted to business manager – a role that pushed her to grow, take on new responsibilities and connect with leadership throughout the school.

As business manager, Roach worked alongside human resources by assisting in hiring and compensation decisions, acted as a liaison for public safety and IT, helped oversee a variety of facilities projects and developed lasting relationships with the deans she supported.

“I learned quite a bit about the nursing profession and got to know the nursing staff, faculty and adjunct professors,” she said. “They all have such an important role.”

In March 2024, after 37 years at SLU and a lot of thought and careful planning, Roach decided she was ready to retire, a move that will allow her to spend more time with her five young grandchildren and give back to her community as a volunteer. And while she's focused on the future, she will always carry her time at the School of Nursing with her.

“The school is always going to be really special to me,” she said.



THE MOST FLEXIBLE MASTER'S DEGREE ON THE PLANET *Exploring the School of Nursing's MSN-CNL program*

For years, nurses who wanted to pursue their Master of Science in Nursing, including students at Saint Louis University, had essentially one option: they could pursue an advanced practice master's degree and become a nurse practitioner. It's a popular route, but it didn't address the growing understanding that not every nurse seeking to advance their career wants to become an NP.

In 2016, leadership at the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing (VSON) decided to create a new path forward for graduate nursing students seeking to lead in different ways. SLU's Master of Science – Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) degree program is dynamic and versatile, preparing nurses for leadership in a variety of health care settings and in a wide range of roles. Students take their classes online, with opportunities for hands-on learning as well.

Since the VSON already had an accelerated direct-entry Clinical Nurse Leader program for students who had a degree in a field other than nursing, adding this traditional MSN-CNL degree seemed like an excellent fit.

“It's what I love to call ‘the most flexible master's degree on the planet,’” SLU nursing professor Bobbi Shatto said. Shatto is the coordinator of the MSN-CNL program, and she takes pride in the breadth of information and experiences her students gather during their time in the program. “It has multiple competencies and a lot of different advanced skillsets, including leadership, administration, nursing education, informatics, quality improvement, and safety... Our students get an education in all of those different competencies.”

The MSN-CNL degree program drew its first students thanks in part to a partnership with SSM Health, in which nurses who work for the health system are given the opportunity to participate in the program at a significantly reduced cost and gain leadership skills that will benefit their careers, as well as the overall health care system.

Each student who enters the program has a personalized vision for how they hope to utilize its versatility and lead in the next phase of their career.

“It gives our students a huge, broad opportunity to do multiple different jobs,” Shatto said. “They can go into nursing administration. They can go into education, whether it's traditional academic education or education on the floor.”

MSN-CNL faculty teach students to look at problems within a health care setting and act as systems analysts.

“We look at a problem and say, ‘Where's the breakdown? Why is it taking three times longer than it should to solve this problem?’” Shatto said. “You want to take a global look. We're teaching our students how to do that.”

Because these problems (a high rate of skin breakdown in an intensive care unit is one example) cost money and time and can negatively affect patient outcomes, Shatto and the leadership team at the School of Nursing see CNL graduates as bringing valuable cost savings to their hospitals and institutions.

Upon completion of the program, graduates have the opportunity to sit for the Clinical Nurse Leader exam offered by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Commission on Nurse Certification. The certification opens doors to careers, is especially sought after at magnet hospitals – and is internationally recognized, which means SLU's program can accept students from anywhere in the world who meet our admission criteria. In past years, there have been students from countries including Spain and from across the United States, including Alaska.

Student demographics vary greatly. There is no typical MSN-CNL student.

“Our students are all over the board. Some come to the program right off the bat, and some come later. We're getting new nursing graduates and students that already have 10 or 20 years of experience,” Shatto said. “That makes for such a rich program.”

Some students who graduate from the program decide to move seamlessly into VSON's nurse practitioner program or its DNP-Nurse Executive Leader program, while others find their place in administration focusing on efficiency and health outcomes or teaching future nurses. The versatility and flexibility of the MSN-CNL offers the opportunity to lead in new ways, and that's just what its founders intended.

“Once these students graduate, they have all of these different skills that they can utilize within the systems themselves,” Shatto said. “We are showing hospitals how hiring a Clinical Nurse Leader can solve problems.”

They began their nursing education during the COVID-19 pandemic AND ENDED WITH A UNIQUE SENSE OF PRIDE

For any graduating high school senior, the transition to college can be daunting. There are new people, new programs and new routines to learn. It isn't easy, even during normal circumstances, but the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing students who began their journeys in the fall of 2020 had an unprecedented set of challenges to navigate. Now, more than four years later, they're able to look back and reflect on the trials and surprising lessons of becoming nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Luke Gehringer (BSN '24) came to Saint Louis University already anticipating that his freshman year would be anything but typical. The pandemic hit in the spring of his junior year of high school, and his graduation ceremony from Marquette High School in Milwaukee was postponed for months until it was finally held the week before he left for SLU.

The first time he met his new SLU roommate was in line while waiting to get tested for COVID-19.

"There were more rules, and we had to wear masks everywhere. We could only have one or two guests in our rooms at a time," Gehringer said. "I know it was necessary, but when you're already anxious about starting college, it definitely made it harder to make friends."

Gehringer joined SLU's rugby team to meet people and stay active, and he got ready to launch his SLU education, which was mostly online aside from one nursing class, Nursing 1400. The class was held in the ballroom at Busch Student Center, where students were spaced in desks six feet apart. On nice days, they would go outside for class.

"I vividly remember that class," he said. "I loved that class – it made me proud to be a nurse. You're meeting all these new kids, and you're all nervous, but it's how I made many of my freshman friends."

Mary Kate Daly (BSN '24), who came to SLU from Chicago, shares in Gehringer's appreciation for Nursing 1400. It stood out in a sea of online classes, and it became a source of friendship and connection that she carried throughout nursing school. The opportunity to meet in person felt like a gift.

"I really appreciated that about SLU, because I had some friends at other schools who were totally online for their first semester. I was glad that we got to meet in person, even six feet apart," she said. "I met a few other girls who I would sit next to every day in that class. We also studied together in the dorms."

The struggle to find community made Gehringer and Daly's freshman year feel challenging and isolating, and they were anxious to continue their nursing education in a more collaborative, hands-on way. By their sophomore year, restrictions throughout the world were beginning to lift, and both students were able to study for a semester at SLU's campus in Madrid, Spain.

They were also able to do their clinical rotations in person. After a year of isolation and online classes, this step toward normalcy was a relief, but it came with some anxiety too. There's a big difference between learning about nursing and putting your skills into practice.

"I just remember showing up to my first clinical sophomore year and feeling totally shocked at how fast-paced it was, especially learning about medications and hospital protocol," Daly said.

But ultimately, the in-person, hands-on opportunities helped her move her education forward in a new, invaluable way.

"The classes are great, but once you're on the floor at the hospital, you really see what it's like to be a nurse," she said.

For Gehringer, Daly and their classmates, the pandemic took away so much – high school graduation ceremonies, peace of mind, the opportunity to easily make friends and join clubs their freshman year at SLU – but they've managed to keep perspective on the insight and opportunities they've gained, professionally and personally. Daly cited the pandemic pushing hospitals to greatly improve their safety and sanitation procedures, while Gehringer mentioned getting the chance to help give other students their flu and COVID-19 vaccines when he was just a freshman.

"All of this was a blessing in some ways because adversity can teach us to be stronger," Gehringer said. "I always try to be positive about it. When you get stuck on all the wrongs in life, you miss out on what's enjoyable."

Gehringer was determined to find as much joy and connection as possible. He and his classmates would finally get a real, normal graduation ceremony, and he wanted to make the most of it. As his SLU graduation approached, he decided to ask if he could share his reflections with his instructors and classmates at their graduation ceremony.

His vision was a speech rooted in his Catholic faith and focused on inspiring his peers as they prepared to begin their nursing careers – while recognizing everything they had gone through to get to this point.

"I love talking. I'm a people person," Gehringer said. "I love Jesus, and he's been such a rock for me in good times and in bad. If I could just plant a seed of what he's done for me, that's what I tried to express."

Having a student speak at graduation was a new idea for the School of Nursing, but school leadership agreed to it, and Gehringer got to work putting his speech together, incorporating a message of service to others. On the day of the ceremony, he was nervous, but the feedback he received after his speech made it all worthwhile.

"My favorite part of the day was hearing from people who appreciated the speech and loved the message of faith and service," he said. "It was especially great hearing from parents and non-traditional BSN students."

Daly saw graduation as a culmination of everything she and her classmates had been through together.

"It was awesome being there. We were seated by major, and it felt amazing to be sitting by all of the nursing majors because we had worked so hard," she said. "Nursing is no joke, and I felt really proud that day to be there with everybody."

Today, both students are settling into careers they worked hard to achieve with the support of their SLU nursing instructors. Gehringer is an ER nurse in St. Louis, and Daly is a neonatal intensive care unit nurse in downtown Chicago. They're happy to have the pandemic experience behind them and grateful to move forward with the knowledge and values they received at the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing.

As Gehringer said in his speech, to an audience of traditional and non-traditional students, friends, family and faculty, "SLU didn't just teach me to be a nurse. It taught me how to serve."

DALY, FOURTH FROM THE RIGHT, AND HER SCHOOL OF NURSING CLASSMATES CELEBRATE AFTER COMMENCEMENT



STUDENT STORIES:

Recent graduate celebrates family, fashion and tradition

Tati Cuadra, a 2023 graduate, has participated in the Missouri Botanical Garden's Japanese Festival ever since she was little. Her grandmother organizes the Kimono Fashion Show each year, and the Labor Day Weekend festival has become a family affair.

"I love that I'm able to showcase my culture for the people of St. Louis," Cuadra said. "The Kimono Fashion Show has been a tradition in my family ever since my grandma and mom immigrated to St. Louis. The kimonos worn in the fashion show have been passed down within different families for generations and donated to my grandma for safekeeping and events like this one."



CUADRA PREPARES FOR THE JAPANESE FESTIVAL

IN MEMORIAM

ANNE PERRY, ED.D., RN, FAAN 1947 – 2024

Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing faculty and students, along with the entire Saint Louis University community, were saddened to lose alumna, former faculty member and celebrated author Anne Perry in March 2024. Perry earned her bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Michigan, her master's degree in nursing from SLU and her doctorate in education from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

Perry began her academic career as an assistant professor at SLU. She rose to full professor and interim director of research before leaving in 2004 to become department chair of the primary care and health systems nursing program at SIU-E, and then the interim dean of the university's nursing school. Along the way, she became a strong advocate for advancing clinical nursing practice standards. She co-authored four internationally acclaimed nursing textbooks — *Basic Nursing, Fundamentals of Nursing, Nursing Interventions and Clinical Skills* and *Clinical Nursing Skills and Techniques*.

Perry's impact on the nursing community in St. Louis and beyond is immeasurable. Her legacy includes a significant scholarship that will be given to an incoming Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing student in her honor.

KATHLEEN CARRIL 1969 – 2024

The Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing community was also saddened by the loss of Kathleen Carril in April 2024. In addition to practicing nursing at hospitals throughout the St. Louis area, including Saint Louis University Hospital, Carril was able to combine her love of nursing and her passion for education as a beloved assistant professor of nursing at SLU. She was fully committed to inspiring and mentoring a new generation of nurses, and she is missed by her colleagues and students alike.

"Kathleen was an extraordinary clinician, teacher and the ultimate clinical nurse leader," SLU nursing professor Bobbi Shatto said. "Her students absolutely loved her, and she is greatly missed."

ALUMNI DEATHS

1944 Elizabeth (Jarema) Ostmann	Jeanne Marie (Ludewig) McCormack Mary (Cenac) Bean
1945 Margaret (Golski) Kuzio Winifred (Coyle) Sheehan	1972 Judith (Noltkamper) Parrish
1948 Dorothy Spencer	1973 Dianne (Cruvant) Williams
1949 Esther (Moran) Wilson	1974 Jeanne Hermann
1953 Maryanna (Mc Mullan) Coad Mary Ellen (Cornell) Brunner	1975 Margaret (Pursley) Quinn Owen McArdle
1955 Jeannine (Diver) McGlynn Lillian Keledy	1976 Patricia Gibson Patricia Hogan Margaret (Hamilton) Behrendt
1956 Mary Clark	1977 Barbara Dubbert Jerry (McNamara) Obst Lisa (Farber) Wohl
1957 Ruthellyn (Harle) Bobak	1978 Karen (Pratte) Kiernan Kathleen (Thomason) Cook
1958 Joyce (McGinty) Petrunia	1979 Anne Caradonna Betty (Mehner) Vogelsang Mary Buhr
1959 Elizabeth Cleinmark Elizabeth (Arts) De Armond Lois (Macaluso) Khatchadourian Rita (Vessell) Flaherty Susanne (Kiefer) Nista	1980 Elizabeth (Zipfel) Clamp Gloria (Andes) Mutka Rita Horwitz
1960 Ann Gross Elizabeth (Fitzgerald) Quinn Mary Ann (O'Farrell) Stallings Rosalie (Mondello) Bennett	1981 Juanita Simmons
1962 Barbara (Wade) Waible Maureen (Mooney) Short	1982 Sally Rinehart
1963 Jane Pellowski Rose (Wijas) Elliott	1984 Florence Nieder
1965 Carolyn (Stenger) Talbott Frances (Cerne) Leone Mary Ann Wilhelm	1986 Judith (Moore) Morice
1968 Anne Carlino	1987 Josephine (Hughes) Hawkins
1971 Annette Froehlich Janice (Kocur) Drew	1989 Eva Wren
	1992 Branka Tassera



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