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In Person.

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# KALEIDOSCOPE





“The simplest  
and most  
practical lesson  
I know is to  
resolve to be  
good today,  
but better  
tomorrow.”

— Catherine McAuley



## KALEIDOSCOPE

WINTER 2023

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Maria College welcomes letters about articles or items published in recent issues.

Please submit your letters to Vicki DiLorenzo, MBA, Editor at: [vdilorenzo@mariacollege.edu](mailto:vdilorenzo@mariacollege.edu)

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Editor: Vicki DiLorenzo, MBA  
Design: TILT36T°

Photographers/Illustrators  
Mark McCarty, Kris Qua, Beth Mikalonis.  
Racheal Paz, Erin O'Melia.

Editorial Offices:  
700 New Scotland Ave.  
Albany, NY 12208  
PH: 518.438.3111  
FAX: 518.438.7170

Submit alumni information at:  
[mariacollege.edu/alumni-news](http://mariacollege.edu/alumni-news)

Send updated address information to:  
[vdilorenzo@mariacollege.edu](mailto:vdilorenzo@mariacollege.edu)  
or  
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Dr. Lynn Ortale,  
In Person.**

*She's building a culture  
of energized, enabled  
process, with participation  
as its engine and a  
stronger future as its goal.*



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Welcome to the inaugural edition of Kaleidoscope, the official magazine of Maria College. Kaleidoscope celebrates the transformative spirit of Maria College and is a place where we can share stories about the past, present, and future of a place that plays such a vital part in our lives.

Here at Maria, we're committed to living and honoring the Sisters of Mercy through practical experiences, on campus and off. Working to fulfill their mission and objectives, together. Which means enabling and encouraging our alumni, employees, friends, and neighbors to stand against injustices;

practice compassionate care; and treat every person with dignity, while simultaneously exploring transformative opportunities for the College itself to thrive.

And that is the vision and intention of this magazine. To raise the volume on our communal efforts by creating a printed record in which to share, recognize, and celebrate our joyful actions. A place where we can demonstrate our unity around intentional diversities — in perspectives, audience, innovation, and purpose. Hence, the name Kaleidoscope. How we can begin acknowledging the harmony we share across broad genres, topics, fields of study, and generations. And hopefully, how we can continue to inspire and motivate each other as we move forward — continuing to face greater challenges by celebrating our achievements, of every size. A magazine designed to make thoughtful connections among thought leaders and innovators; plans and projects; leaders and employers.

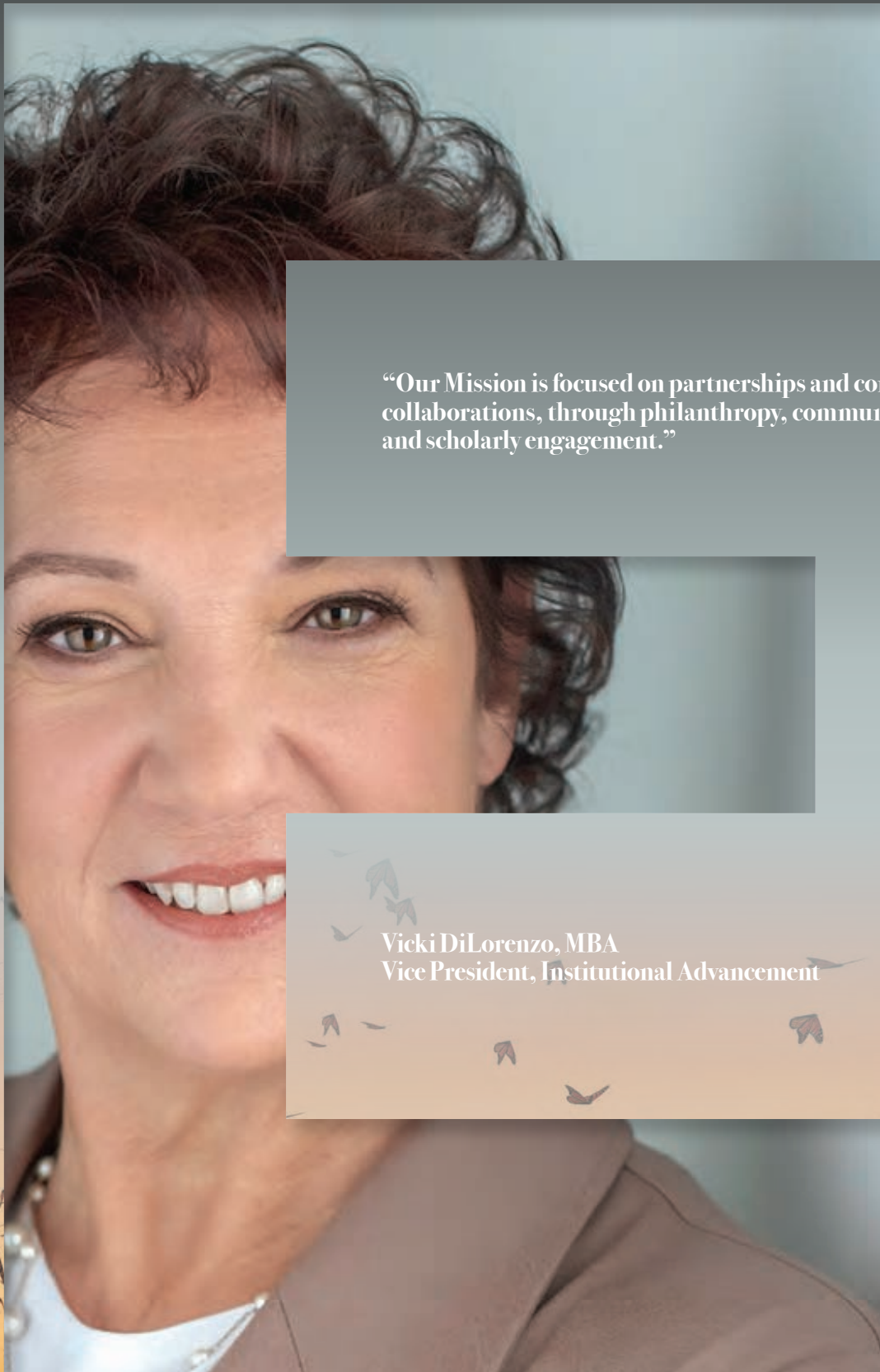
We believe Kaleidoscope will be instrumental in deepening your connection to Maria College and will become an indispensable place where

we commemorate achievements, recognize milestones, and share anecdotes and memories that unite all of us as Monarchs. We hope that the transformations and successes highlighted in these pages will inspire you to get in touch to share your personal and professional news and reconnect with the Maria community at one of the upcoming alumni events.

**Vicki DiLorenzo, MBA**  
Vice President  
Institutional Advancement







“Our Mission is focused on partnerships and community collaborations, through philanthropy, community service and scholarly engagement.”

Vicki DiLorenzo, MBA  
Vice President, Institutional Advancement





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## Year One with Dr. Lynn Ortale, In Person.

Y E A R O N E

*“Catherine McAuley’s mission has never been more relevant. And now, Maria’s identity has never been stronger.”*

**She’s building a culture of energized, enabled progress, in person — with participation as its engine and a stronger future as its goal.**

**Dr. Ortale is metaphorically and physically redirecting us to focus on a bigger picture.**

*“Kindness, care, and compassion are integral to Maria College’s mission, how we support our students, and the differentiator of a Maria College graduate.”*





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# DR.

Lynn Ortale, the current and sixth President of Maria College, is everywhere – all the time. Or at least that's how it feels, because she seems to have spent this past year living up to her commitment to serve Maria – in person. But not alone. And that's her secret sauce. Something those who attended the inauguration experienced first, as she redirected, expanded, or shared her spotlight at every opportunity. First with a new grandchild, in full regalia. A scene-stealing, 6-month-old Kiernan who charmed everyone with a gravitas perfectly suited to the

occasion. Next, by individualizing her Medallion of Office ceremony – passing it along the ranks of intimate representatives spanning her professional journey to this momentous occasion from undergraduate, through doctoral education, to progressively influential institutional positions. Demonstrating the principle that no one succeeds alone with true authenticity and heartfelt personal gratitude. And expanding a rather traditional ceremony – intended to center on her – into something thoroughly more engaging (yet full of personal

significance) that the entire community could experience. All in all, a very Maria kind of thing to do.

Continued on page 6





# AND

***“Maria is no more a women’s college than nursing is a women’s profession. What we are is a leading healthcare resource whose graduates include compassion as one of their identifying skillsets.”***

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**She’s big on collective genius and collaboration - it’s a leadership style that encourages action, not to mention shared responsibility.**

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*“By understanding individual needs and aligning them with our collective goals and the greater Mercy Mission we empower each other to shape Maria’s future.”*

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*“Nursing isn’t just a profession here, it’s a legacy of highly-skilled dedication rooted in true compassion. We make a true impact on the region with our graduates.”*

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that’s how her tenure has been going, ever since. In a marathon of meaningful and relational connections leading to communal action. An inspiring demonstration of getting things done via servant leadership with superbly effective management skills. Impressive during this time of economic turmoil, social challenges, technological disruption, and healthcare crises. Not to mention ongoing campus construction and yes, the regular administration and institutional challenges during a momentous 65th anniversary year. And so here she is, a year later — and by “here,” we mean everywhere you look.

Visiting and including the Sisters of Mercy still residing on campus (some not mobile enough to attend campus events in person). Introducing the first official Maria mascot and refreshed brand platform. Offering her office as classroom space, more than once. Surprising unofficial alumni gatherings of all kinds with attendance, plus a little Maria swag. As well as attending numerous prestigious and highly competitive presidential training opportunities as an influential advocate, community member, leader, and educator. All while representing Maria at an unspeakably large number of meetings and calls, around visits to her other, smaller, yet expanding family unit (including the now more active and less ceremonial Kiernan).



Taking the idea of Maria as a community literally, which may be the true secret behind her seemingly tireless attention. Because she doesn’t make any of this about herself, instead asking, what’s good for Maria? And as a result, building a culture of energized, enabled progress with participation as its engine and a stronger future as its goal. Successful, because Catherine McAuley’s mission has never been more relevant than it is today. And effective, because Dr. Ortale pulls all parties involved into shouldering some of that mission (and responsibility) with her. Transforming her knowledge and leadership skills into caring service.



Always circling back to the core of what makes Maria’s heart beat — kindness. Going so far as to establish a #BeKind movement through a Random Acts of Kindness Day for the relaunch of Maria’s brand platform in the region. An event to raise morale and spread recognition of the unique benevolence that defines and directs our programming. Even while making plans to ensure the College’s growth and security around more academic and financial lines. It’s almost as if she’s taking it all personally.

Which sounds very highfalutin and over the top, but follows a more exacting and strategic plan, moving step by step toward tangible goals on an impressive number of fronts. As Dr. Ortale establishes herself as an advocate for institutional branding, promoter



of advanced programs, custodian of endless campus improvements, and champion of new technologies. She's proven to be a leader personally interested in provoking more active alumni support and interactive partnerships as well as a cultural force for kindness. Stewarding a significant and transformational gift bestowed by Richard Siek in honor of his late wife Andrea Lewis Siek, for whom the Nursing School will be named.

A whole lot of action and news that not many in the region seem to hear enough about, another thing Dr. Ortale is working on connecting the dots. Because until recently, Maria has worked mostly undercover in the region. And maintaining and increasing our ability to transform lives depends on publicizing accomplishments. Or should we say, by showing off Dr. Ortale's bigger picture(s) of ongoing achievements. The things her focus on active branding can help bring to light. Such as reminding the region that Maria has launched 11,000 exemplary alumni nurses into a profession desperate for more qualified, prepared candidates – with a 91% NCLEX-RN pass rate for first-time test takers (a score well above the national average).



Publicizing the advancements in our nursing program that will maintain our leadership position with Virtual Reality technologies in our Center for Academic Innovation, and the addition of a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (CASAC) training site. Promoting our new and thriving graduate program, the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy.

And just sharing with the world how Maria continues to improve accessibility with a new, fully online Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

All while she continues nurturing numerous productive corporate partnerships to continually broaden our areas of expertise, enhance recruitment efforts, and expand our spheres of influence. Including those closest to her heart, such as the launch of an ARC Lexington collaboration toward greater neurodiversity inclusion.

Bringing us back very tidily to how we started this abridged overview of her first year – at an inauguration packed with expansive and momentous meaning, not really centered on Dr. Ortale at all. In which we'd be remiss by not also mentioning her first honorary degree, bestowed upon the Executive Director and CEO of the ARC Lexington (and founder of Transitions), Shaloni Winston. Demonstrating once again that if it happened at Maria since last year or is reshaping the future of the college – Dr. Ortale's most likely at its center, in person and pointing toward someone else.

***“Maria has been a well-kept secret. It’s time to illuminate our achievements, with a 91% NCLEX-RN pass rates for first time test takers, to our groundbreaking community partnerships.”***

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*“We are the stewards of the Sisters of Mercy mission moving forward. I take that commitment very seriously.”*

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*“I’m not in it for the prestige, I’m not in it for the power, I’m just in it for the service. I believe in servant leadership.”*

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*“My purpose is to continue the Mercy Mission on a personal and institutional level while empowering the connections to impact a future well past my tenure.”*

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# A GLIMPSE INTO TOMORROW, TODAY.







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“As student nurses progress in the program, it is important to develop their critical thinking by transferring theory to practice in the laboratory setting.”

**Victoria Callagan, Ph.D.**  
Maria College Associate Chair  
of Nursing for Curriculum

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“VR is not new but recent technological advancements have made it possible for VR environments to simulate real-life patient experiences in a risk-free environment, offer repeated practice using clinical judgment, exposing students to varied clinical problems, and is portable.”

**Colleen Carmody, Ed.D., R.N.**  
Maria College Dean of Nursing

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THE

PREPARED

FOR THE





## **The Center for Academic Innovation is the future of nursing at Maria College.**

To prepare nurses for the rapidly changing field of healthcare, Maria College has created an environment of innovative technology available for all students to utilize. Maria's state-of-the-art nursing facility consists of 6,500 square-feet of space and is in the Andrea Lewis Siek School of Nursing. Highlights of the new space include a nurse's station, skills labs, a simulation suite, and debriefing classrooms.

This year, Maria College was awarded \$770,000 to develop a world-class virtual reality (VR) nursing simulation lab. The Center for Academic Innovation will place students in an immersive

three-dimensional environment, allowing them to perform clinical interventions, interact with a healthcare team, and receive feedback on varying scenarios. Maria's VR lab is also combating issues within the healthcare field, specifically the lack of clinical rotations. The lab is creating an additional funnel of opportunities and experience for students and nurses, further preparing them for the field.

Between the Center for Academic Innovation and the Andrea Lewis Siek School of Nursing, Maria College is adapting with the industry and preparing students for the real world.



Each of these provides students with different scenarios to practice in a safe and controlled training environment.

All virtual patient educational software helps students improve both communication and diagnostic skills. This cutting-edge technology puts Maria ahead of most educational institutions, giving students the best possible education and experience to succeed in this industry and give back to their community.





# MONARCH





# MADNESS





“i”

need a name



# Monarchs are masters of change, symbols of hope, and — best of all — are super personable.

“Success and happiness aren’t always about flying in a straight line.”

– Maria College’s Mascot

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This Monarch is all about spirited transformation, an embodiment of our shared values, campus spirit and overwhelming need for something fun.

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Monarch butterflies boast an abundance of cultural significance across the globe, signifying rebirth to many Catholics.

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According to some sources, sighting a Monarch butterfly is a sign that you are following the right path to achieve your goals.

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In partnership with the Mercy Community Monarch Milkweed Project there is a milkweed habitat along the monarch’s migratory path right here on campus.

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So, hello. Forgive my nervousness, I’m really more of a social media kind of lepidoptera. But what a time to come out of the cocoon. I can barely contain myself. Because, well, I’m the very first Official Maria Mascot – with a magazine named after me and everything. On the 65th anniversary of the College, too. It’s enough to make you flap erratically. The biggest thing to happen to me, for sure. And something I’ve been dreaming about since I was a chrysalis, maybe even caterpillar. A long time, anyway. So, if you can’t tell, I’m beyond joyous to be here, embodying the spirit of the college, representing the Sisters of Mercy’s mission – launching what I hope will be a long, successful career. It’s incredible. I mean look at the size of this grin. I just can’t hide it. Ever.

A little more about me: My pronouns are they/them. I am indeed a little big for my species. I’m one of 500 siblings born to a single mom (like all monarchs). I speak fluent Spanish. Love endurance racing. Migrating with my friends. Just another butterfly trying to find my place in the world, until now. Flying in a random pattern and looking to land somewhere tasty. College didn’t seem like an option, even though I did pretty well pupating. But I still wanted to do something with my life. Be more than just another pretty bug. Then, I fluttered onto the incredible fact I’d been hatched on a preserve — at a college. One that seriously vibed with my Monarch values. This college. Turns out I’d been here all along

without knowing it. Which just goes to show you, sometimes you miss the campus for the milkweed. I fluttered right up and left and over to admissions.

As if predetermined, I encountered Monarch levels of kindness and patience there. An administration, faculty, and employees eager to guide me through yet another challenging transformation. So I could make a difference — by being myself, only more so. Be the embodiment of tenacity, renewal, spirituality, and the overwhelming power of community — not to mention ice cream on a summer’s day and long naps in winter. And now... here I am. A butterfly with my own magazine and fully engaged with meaningful work. My mother cried when she heard (once I reminded her who I was). And larvae are lining up to be interns already, it’s a little bit humbling.

But I do have one issue. Because apparently, as one of 500 eggs, my species isn’t big on individual names. Yet as a professional working mascot, I sure could use one — for paperwork, formal occasions, shouting across campus and omg, getting my coffee order. So, if you’re into it, I’d love your suggestions @MariaCollege on Instagram. Either way though, nice to meet you. I can’t wait to see you around on (and off) campus.

LET’S GO MONARCHS.



# EMERCO

## **Maria College is doing its part in alleviating the nursing crisis within the Capital Region, and it's helping.**

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The emergency nursing crisis is not a recent issue within the industry, but it has progressed significantly within the past few years. Heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the nursing shortage has been affecting hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout the country. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) conducted research examining the impact of COVID-19 on nurses and where that leaves the field today. A key takeaway from the research found that one-fifth of Registered Nurses are projected to leave the field. The study showed that stress and burnout from COVID-19 were some of the top reasons nurses left. Although the pandemic highlighted the nursing crisis, there are many underlying factors contributing — one being the average age of nurses, which is reported to be 52. Most of the workforce is getting closer to retirement, which will ultimately lead to a greater staffing shortage for nurses. Lastly, one of the biggest factors in this crisis comes down to education. According to the

American Association of Colleges of Nursing, nursing school enrollment is not growing fast enough to meet the demands of the industry today. Along with that, the country has seen a shortage of faculty, resulting in restricting enrollment.

But Maria is actively combating this crisis.

At Maria College, students become a part of the Capital Region's strongest nursing program. There are multiple nursing programs to fit the need of all students — traditional and non-traditional alike. Pairing our programs with hands-on and compassionate staff, students receive education and training that prepares them for a career in this field. Each of our programs holds unique features to alleviate the nursing crisis.

Maria's Practical Nursing Certificate (LPN) is the program to kickstart one's nursing career. The program can be completed in just 16 months, putting LPNs in the field sooner.

Not only is this program effective and efficient, the first-time pass rate for Maria's 2023 students that took the NCLEX-LPN was 100%, plus Maria also offers weekend classes to fit with any schedule.

The Nursing AAS (RN) program is Maria's 2-year Associate Degree program. Upon completion, students are eligible to take the National Council Licensure Examination and begin their careers as RNs. This program offers evening and day classes, perfect for the working student.

Maria College's RN-BS Degree in Nursing is specifically designed for registered nurses who are looking to further their education and professional development. This degree program can be completed on either a full-time or part-time basis, allowing individuals to finish at their own pace and continue working through their education.



# GENCY

## Nursing Crisis.

The Online Nursing BS Degree is Maria College's fully online RN-BS program. It can be completed in 12 months. Students can begin in either Fall or Spring. The program is designed for the working nurse in mind, ensuring that furthering education is not an obstacle.

To tackle the nursing enrollment levels in the country, each one of Maria's programs offers varying schedule options for students, allowing more individuals to enroll in nursing programs. Not only that, Maria offers smaller classes for all program levels, ensuring each student receives the hands-on and personal attention that will allow them to succeed within the evolving and fast-paced industry. The faculty is crafted of working professionals within the healthcare field, offering their real world expertise and knowledge to students.

Not only is Maria actively alleviating part of the nursing crisis within the Capital Region,

but it is doing so successfully. The first-time pass rate for Maria students that take the NCLEX-RN is 91% — higher than the average for New York State. Maria College has also been ranked in the top 5% nationally for Most Focused Associate's Degree Colleges for Nursing.

Although the nursing crisis isn't a new issue the industry has seen, Maria College has been able to adapt and change with the industry's needs. Between multiple top-rated programs with flexible scheduling, state-of-the-art technology, and a small faculty-to-student ratio, the Capital Region will see a positive shift in the nursing crisis.

# RN-BSN

ONE YEAR / ONLINE

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*The current trend sees some nursing schools turning away thousands of applicants during a major nursing shortage.*

*Here's why:*

*Faculty shortages.*

*Nursing schools have nearly 2,000 full-time faculty positions to fill, according to the Nursing College Association. Just under 8% of the teaching slots are vacant.*

*Insufficient opportunity for clinical placements.*

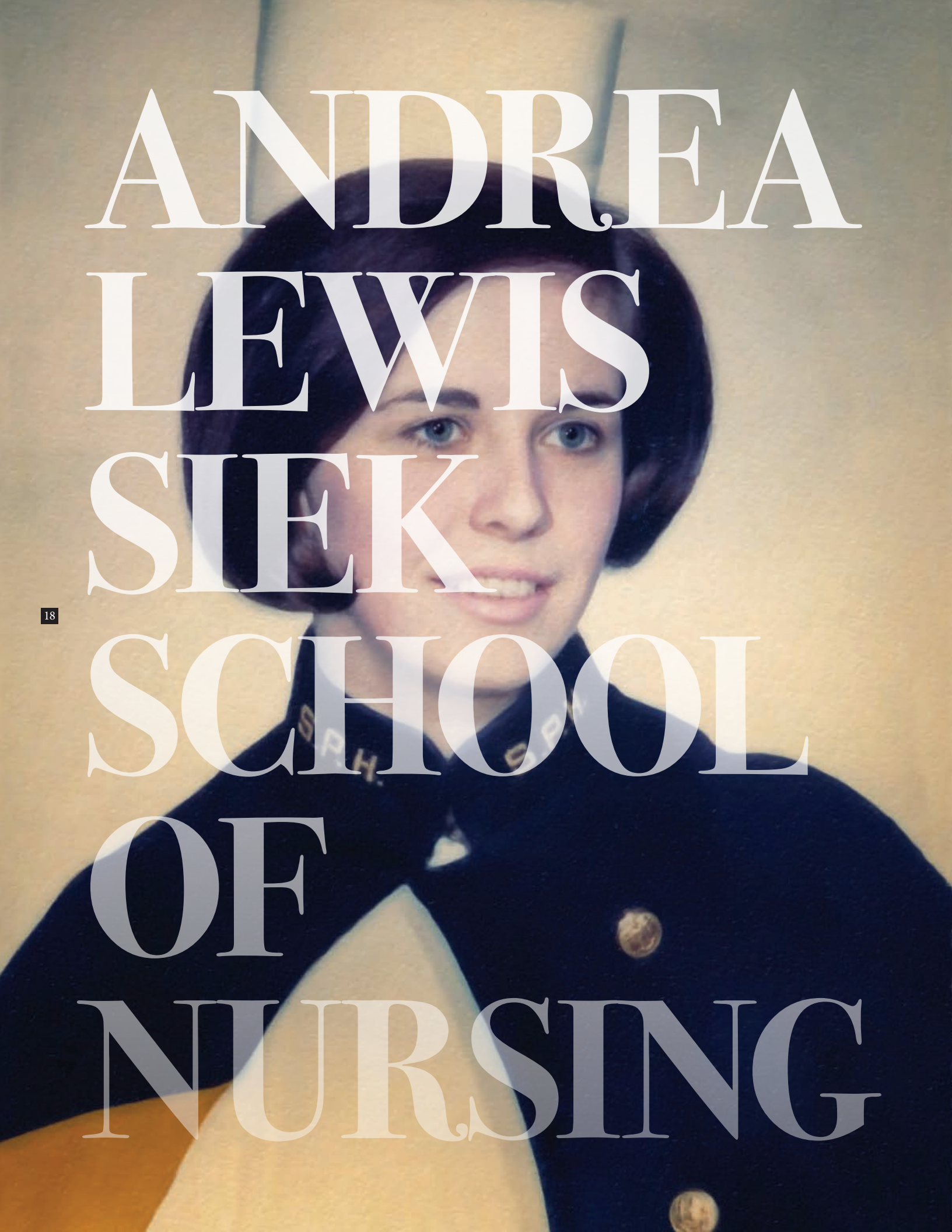
*Another barrier to admitting more nursing students is the limited availability of clinical rotations at hospitals or other health care providers, as well as the lack of experienced nurses and other medical professionals to supervise the students.*

*Efforts underway to recruit more nursing faculty.*

*The US Department of Health and Human Services announced in August that it will pump an additional \$26.5 million into the Nurse Faculty Loan Program.*

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# ANDREA LEWIS SIEK SCHOOL OF NURSING



# Maria College names nursing school to honor the contributions of Andrea Lewis Siek, to the nursing profession.



In recognition of a transformational gift – the largest in the college's 65-year history – Maria College is naming its nursing school the Andrea Lewis Siek School of Nursing. The significant gift was made in honor of Andrea Lewis Siek, R.N., a 1966 graduate of Troy High School and 1969 graduate of St. Peter's Hospital School of Nursing, the late wife of Richard E. Siek, and her devoted husband and a Navy veteran. This historic gift was made on September 7th to celebrate what would have been Andrea's 75th birthday. Andrea lived a life of service as a charge nurse and mentor to countless nurses. Andrea was humble, kind, and dedicated herself to the highest professional standards. She was known as the "go-to person" in the hospital when faced with challenging situations. Andrea's exceptional leadership enabled those under her supervision to learn from her example and ensure patients received the best medical care complete with great compassion. When illness forced Andrea to retire early, she continued to be an advocate for the nursing profession and the importance of carefully-trained, highly-skilled nurses. Andrea's genuine care of others stretched beyond the hospital to volunteer work and playing "Santa" to families in need. She would anonymously pay for gifts families had on "layaway" and she would have gifts simply appear at the front door of people's homes. Andrea was selfless and thoughtful in her care of others.

Andrea and Richard together lived a life of service. Richard, a retired Chief Petty Officer with an affiliation with the Navy Seabees for 36 years, serves as a Trustee on the Support Committee for the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery where he established the memorial bench program to honor loved ones. He is also a co-facilitator for the "HEAL" Grief Support Group. As a thoughtful philanthropist Richard supports both Maria College and St. Peter's Health Partners in purposeful ways to honor Andrea's life-long commitment of service to others.

Since Andrea's death on March 16, 2017, Richard has established three nursing scholarships at the certificate, associate, and bachelor levels; refurbished a chapel

in McAuley Hall which includes a statue of Our Lady of Grace commissioned in Rome, Italy; enhanced a state-of-the-art nursing simulation lab to support students' learning and preparation to serve as nurses; and commissioned a life-sized bronze statue of Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, as well as a campus Serenity Garden which he unveiled and dedicated on October 19, 2023. All of Richard's philanthropic gifts are for the benefit of Maria College students and to further the legacy of his beloved wife, Andrea.

"None of this is about me. It's all about what I can do to assist my dearly departed wife, Andrea, to continue to do what she loved best: to help people. Maria College has given me the platform and opportunities to continue Andrea's wishes through some scholarships and donations. I thoroughly enjoy my affiliation with the Maria Community and thank them from the bottom of my heart," said Richard.

Dr. Lynn Ortale, President, expressed her gratitude "for this historic and transformative gift for Maria College. The way Andrea chose to live her life serves as an exceptional example for our nursing students as they prepare to lead and serve. A true act of love by Richard to honor Andrea's legacy in a meaningful and perpetual way. Richard's decision to make this significant gift ensures Andrea's legacy will live on in the hearts, minds, and service of Maria College's faculty and nursing alumni."

Dr. Colleen Carmody, R.N., said, "Maria College's National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) pass rate for first-time test takers is 91%, and (NCLEX-LPN) pass rate for 2023 first-time test takers is 100%, which is among the best in the nation. The National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN) pass rate is 87%. Both programs' pass rates exceed national averages. This gift from Richard Siek ensures that Maria College's Andrea Lewis Siek School of Nursing will continue that standard for years to come."

Maria College has graduated the most nurses in the Capital Region, including a graduating class of 186 nurses in 2023. The majority of Maria College's 5,216 nursing alumni also serve in the Capital Region.

Anne Jung, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs, said, "We are extremely honored to be the recipient of this naming gift. Not only does it continue the generous legacy of Richard and Andrea Siek, but it also allows for Maria College to continue to build a diverse pipeline of both early career nurses and nursing leaders at a time when the nation is facing unprecedented nursing shortages in the healthcare workforce. Maria is proud to graduate the largest numbers of nursing professionals in the area at the LPN, RN and BS Completion level. This generous gift increases the college's ability to maintain the highest standards of excellence in teaching and learning, to encourage innovative scholarship at all levels of our nursing programs, and to deliver nurses committed to the service of others."

"Richard's gift will forever have a positive influence on the future success of our nursing students," said Maria College's Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Vicki DiLorenzo, MBA. "I personally add my sincerest thanks to Richard for choosing Maria College for this significant gift."

Andrea lived, learned, and worked side by side with the Sisters of Mercy who were instrumental in shaping Andrea's leadership as a nurse. Board Chair Dr. Mary Jo LaPosta is grateful to Richard for "supporting the long tradition of the Sisters of Mercy's commitment to educating nurses by naming Maria College's nursing school in perpetuity after his loving and talented wife Andrea." A dedication ceremony is planned for Friday, December 8, which is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This date was selected to reflect Andrea's great devotion to the Blessed Mother.





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# HOMER

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## SCOTT HOMER

"It's about turning off the noise, centering and getting ready for what's next,"

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'95

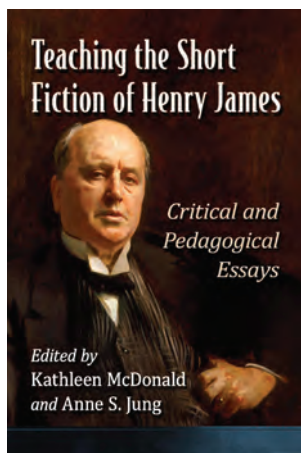
Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program Director Scott Homer — a 1995 graduate of the program he directs — is passionate about increasing understanding of pediatric occupational therapy. He brings volunteers in need to Maria to work with OTA students in the Sensory Room in the McAuley Building, a facility he designed to help manage the environment for children with neurodevelopmental diagnoses. These children are overwhelmed by sensory input from their surroundings and may be nonverbal, exhibit ADHD or obsessive/compulsive behaviors, or even engage in self-harm.

In this room, the OT practitioner can control sound and light — creating a cocoon, if you will — and offer comforting or tactile materials and experiences, like fidget toys, weighted

blankets, and a bubble tank. "It's about turning off the noise, centering and getting ready for what's next," he explains. Having this kind of space for therapeutic activities — Scott says he has children write sensory stories or engage in role play about stressful situations — helps them gradually metamorphose to tolerate the outside world.

Scott says he's noticed an increasing number of college students and adults exhibiting sensory issues. That's why he currently makes the facility available to the entire Maria College community. Scott plans to dedicate the Sensory Room in honor of his brother, Kevin Homer, who passed away in 2018 during its construction. We're proud to help Scott achieve this passion project — we all gain from his care and commitment!





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## Anne Jung, Ph.D.

She boldly brings pedagogical methods to the faculty of Maria College through the essays of Henry James.

### TEACHING THE SHORT FICTION OF HENRY JAMES.

Henry James stands as one of the preeminent writers of the late 19th/early 20th century period; however, the world he wrote about has since disappeared. This collection of essays provides pedagogical assistance for several of his short stories—including “The Jolly Corner,” “The Europeans” and “Traveling Companions”—and his most anthologized longer works. It is aimed at instructors who do not consider themselves experts on James’ work. Each essay approaches a single work, offering a critical analysis as well as providing pedagogical suggestions for how to introduce both the work and the relevant social issues to students of the 21st century.

Despite our focus at Maria College on health care, Chief Academic Officer and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Anne Jung, Ph.D. believes in the absolute relevance of literature: “Students need to engage in significant works of literature in order to understand the world.” This philosophy underpins her 2022 volume, “Teaching the Short Fiction of Henry James: Critical and Pedagogical Essays,” compiled with co-editor Dr. Kathleen McDonald of Norwich University in Vermont. The curated selection of essays is intended to help faculty engage with Henry James’ body of work, sometimes critiqued as ambiguous and impenetrable. “He is still a powerhouse literary figure today,” asserts Dr. Jung.

Born out of a casual conversation with her dissertation director and nurtured through sleepless nights during the

COVID-19 pandemic, the project represents Dr. Jung’s commitment to her chosen discipline – she encourages both students and faculty to recognize and honor this commitment throughout their careers. “There’s a reason that your discipline sparked your interest in the first place,” she says.

While acknowledging the difficulty of undertaking a project like hers, Dr. Jung maintains that encouraging academic exploration by faculty is critical because “it makes them better teachers.” How to begin? She suggests looking at work already accomplished to find the seeds of a project; this volume on Henry James, for example, includes material originally written for Jung’s doctoral dissertation exploring a selection of 19th Century American writers.





22



## 2023 McAuley Service Award Recipient

Two lifetimes of service and compassion.

By bestowing the Catherine McAuley Award for Distinguished Service on Richard E. Siek, we make a small gesture of appreciation measured against his unwavering commitment to Maria College and embodiment of our values. An award shared in spirit with his wife.

Because the late Andrea Lewis Siek remains the catalyst for his good works. As a 1969 graduate of the St. Peter's Hospital School of Nursing, she devoted her life to service as a Registered Nurse; extended her compassion beyond the hospital walls; and supported Richard's own dedication to service throughout their 44-year marriage. Her vibrant advocacy of selfless giving as the path to a fulfilling life so fierce that it still beats in his heart and actions.

A retired Chief Petty Officer with a 36-year affiliation with the Navy Seabees,

Richard serves as a Trustee on the Support Committee for the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery as well as co-facilitator for the "HEAL" Grief Support Group. He also honors Andrea's lifelong devotion to care and compassion through ongoing, purposeful contributions to Maria College and St. Peter's Health Partners.

As a result, he's established three endowed scholarship funds in her name at both Maria College and Samaritan Hospital; refurbished a chapel in McAuley Hall which includes a statue of Our Lady of Grace, commissioned in Rome; enhanced our state-of-the-art nursing simulation lab; commissioned a life-sized bronze statue of Catherine McAuley, and founded a campus Serenity Garden with Dr. Ortale. Contributions and participation reflective of Catherine McAuley's mission as well as Andrea's

dedication to service and care that will have lasting effects on us all at Maria College.

Though in his eyes, "The most noteworthy achievement in my entire life was being the husband of a Registered Nurse, Andrea Lewis Siek." Reminding us of the profound impact one individual's generosity can have on another person, a community, an institution, a profession, and even the region. Just as Catherine McAuley saw hope progressing.



# KNAB



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## WILLIAM G. KNAB

"Nursing gave me a sound perspective about what is important in life and, I believe, made me more effective in the business world."

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# '86

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Nobody worked harder — or longer — to graduate from nursing school than Bill Knab. Bill started his nursing degree in 1976 in Buffalo, NY while working as a chemist and a high school chemistry teacher. Migrating across two schools, two cities, and ten years, in 1986 Bill became a Maria College graduate, and as he tells it, refusing to give up on his A.A.S. in Nursing is his greatest accomplishment.

As a male nurse in 1986, Bill was a pioneer — only 3% of nurses were male at that time. Continuing to work in the chemical industry on weekdays, Bill worked the nursing floor on Friday nights and weekends. "I would go from business, chemistry, money, and production to issues of life, death, God, and family on the nursing floor. It gave me a sound perspective about

what is important in life and, I believe, made me more effective in the business world."

His 35-year career in chemistry reads like fiction: Bill was involved with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and consulted for the EPA, and worked on developing widely-used household drugs like Miralax. "I'm an ordinary person that had extraordinary things happen to him," he says.

Bill is now back in Buffalo, NY, and is retired, but — and this is no surprise to those who know him — continues to tutor, teach, and consult in chemistry.



# WHAT'S GOING ON

**11/11/23**  
Remembrance Day

**11/13/23**  
Kindness Day  
Celebration

**11/28-30/23**  
Instant Admit Days

**11/29/23**  
Occupational Therapy  
Pathway Info Session  
(Virtual)

**11/30/23**  
Nursing Pathway Info  
Session (Virtual)

**12/8/23**  
Celebration of Naming  
of the Andrea Lewis Siek  
School of Nursing.

**12/12/23**  
Foundation Day

**1/24**  
Center for Academic  
Innovation  
Ribbon-cutting

**1/24**  
Project Restart

**1/26/24**  
PDK Induction



## DR. ORTALE INAUGURATION

On May 6, Maria College installed Lynn Ortale, Ph.D. as its sixth president. Dr. Ortale shared the day with her grandson, Kiernan (age 6 months), who had his own regalia for the event.



## WHITE TEA

On Friday, May 19, Class of 2023 nursing graduates were presented with nursing pins at the White Tea ceremony. The pinning ceremony dates to the late 1800s when Florence Nightingale pinned her nurses upon the completion of their education.



## DOUBLE H RANCH

A volunteer team from Maria College – including our Maria Monarch – visited the Double H Ranch on July 13 to welcome campers and assist with check-in. The ranch provides children living with serious medical conditions the experience of an Adirondack summer camp.

5.6.23

5.19.23

7.13.23



# GOING ON

**2/22/24**  
Sigma Induction

**4/24**  
Admissions Info

**5/24**  
Instant Admit Days

**5/19/24**  
Commencement

**FUTURE EVENTS**  
More dates coming soon.

**4/13/24**  
Spring Open House

**4/24-25/24**  
Grad Fair

**5/16/24**  
White Tea



## VALLEY CATS GAME

August 2 was Maria College Night at the Tri-City ValleyCats! President Ortale threw out the first pitch, and our Maria Monarch tossed t-shirts to the crowd, while faculty, staff, and alumni enjoyed the game.



## SARATOGA TRACK DAY

Alumni and friends of the College attended a Breakfast and Breeding Farm Tour at Saratoga Race Course on August 11. After breakfast, attendees explored Old Tavern Farm, and then watched the day's races from the grandstands!



## ALUMNI APPRECIATION DAY

Maria College offered alumni a full day of relaxation, connection, and inspiration on September 30. Event attendees received massage, tasted chocolate, painted mini-Monarchs, and listened to remarks from life coach Benita Zahn.

8.2.23

8.11.23

9.30.23



# Kaliedoscope Khronicles

## Alumni Voices

### JENNIFER RIVENBURGH

AAS in Nursing '16  
Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner

"I chose Maria initially due to it offering evening and weekend nursing classes and clinical to afford me to work full-time as I worked towards achieving a lifelong goal of obtaining my nursing degree. I grew to appreciate the personal, compassionate and nurturing environment Maria provided. I encountered multiple personal struggles and losses during the time I attended Maria. With every struggle the staff provided support and understanding and aided me in navigating those losses. The nursing staff exemplified the qualities of nursing that allowed me to learn and carry into my roles in nursing and ultimately to achieve my Master's and goal of becoming a psychiatric nurse practitioner. My final goal will be to obtain my DNP and return to teaching (I was in education prior to nursing!), hopefully at Maria!"

### LINDA BUCHANAN

AAS in Physical Therapy Assistant Program '81  
Physical Therapy Assistant

"Maria educated me to work as a PTA almost non-stop for these last 42 years. I was educated to work in a career that has had a lot of changes over the years. I have worked in acute care and long term care to outpatient and home care. Most currently I am proudly working at a military hospital treating our active military."

### MARGARET (PICKETT) BROADY

AAS in Early Childhood Education '75  
Paraprofessional

"After high school graduation most of my friends stayed local and went to HVCC. I wanted more of a personal environment.

I was originally considering a job in Dental Hygiene but changed to education. I was especially interested in teaching the fundamentals to very young children which is why I did not pursue a bachelor's degree. My Maria College degree has served me well!"

### ELIZABETH MUGRACE-STEWART

AAS in Nursing '92  
Clinical Educator, Pharma Sales,  
Field Reimbursement Manager

"Ester McEvoy was an excellent teacher. She was always there for me. I learned so much from her, it certainly helped in my career. I got a BS from SUNY and started the NP program. Taught nursing at Samaritan Hospital then went into corporate America. I have done pharma sales, corporate education as well as Field Reimbursement."

### NOREEN DEWIRE GRIMMICK

AAS in Applied Science Nursing '76  
Nurse, Attorney

"My degree from Maria was the 'Mother' of all my degrees: BA in Economics from Siena 1987 (magna cum laude), scholarship to Union College Graduate Management program leading to a joint 1991 Juris Doctor from Albany Law and 1991 MBA from Union. 30 years in legal practice followed the completion of my education. My nursing practice included a 10 year stint in maternal/child health at St. Clare's and Albany Med's NICU; and the ability to provide complex home care to a beloved family member. Notably, my husband graduated from Maria with a degree in nursing 20 years after me."

### STEPHANIE CASTRO

HCM Bachelors Program '21  
Project Analyst, St. Peter's Hospital

"I never thought I'd be where I am today. Maria opened so many doors for me that I am truly blessed and thankful. Through Maria, I was able to find a career that I enjoy doing that helps people in my community and that allows me to be me. I feel like not only did I gain a degree at Maria, I gained the life I had always hoped to have. I'm forever grateful to Maria College."

### REINE MOUITY-NGOYO

AAS in Nursing '16  
Registered Nurse

"Maria definitely transformed my career and made me into the person that I am now."

### MATTHEW COLLINGS

AAS in Nursing '11  
Cardiac Electrophysiology,  
Principal Clinical Specialist

"The education I received at Maria College was the springboard I needed to get me where I am at in my career and life today. I work in cardiac electrophysiology labs across the northeast supporting physicians using our company's products to tailor patient specific strategies during ablation procedures. The work I do satisfies my need to help others by helping to terminate cardiac arrhythmias that affect them negatively. I use the nursing processes and skills I learned at Maria College everyday."

### SUSAN NUGENT NAPIERSKI

AAS, Medical Office Assistant '82  
Director of Bright Horizons Adult Day Social Program at Colonic Senior Service Centers, Inc.

"The foundation of quality education that I received at Maria College inspired me to continue moving forward into other career paths. In 2012 I submitted my resume to Colonic Senior Service Centers, Inc. in hopes of attaining another career change. I was chosen out of several

candidates. When I asked the Executive Director what stood out from my resume that made him choose me over all of the other candidates he stated that it was because I had attended Maria College! He was familiar with Maria College because his wife was an alumna of Maria. What I learned at Maria College and how I was made to feel about my abilities and accomplishments enabled me to continue achieving my goals. Making a difference and helping others within the community was what I always wanted to do. I am doing what I love!"

### SHANNON WILSON

BS in Psychology '21  
Direct Support Professional

"I started at Maria College as a transfer from a four-year college. I was eighteen years old and did not know what I wanted to do with my college journey. I felt lost and did not know where to go. I found Maria College and it truly changed my life. I made connections with people that will be in my life forever, I learned the importance of compassion and I gained self-awareness. My time at Maria was different than most, but that's the amazing thing about Maria College. They accept you for who you are and where you are in your life journey."

### COLLEEN JACKSON

AAS in OTA '14  
Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant in Pediatric Home Health

"The education and knowledge I was given at Maria College in the OTA program was like no other. It was outstanding! I believe what I learned at Maria has helped me in being a supportive COTA, it has helped me with building those strong bonds and relationships with the families and individuals I serve in the pediatric home health setting I work in."



# E KHRONICLES



## Just another way to be kind

What do you do when a bee infestation prevents college from starting? Why, you relocate to the President's Office, of course! This unusual scenario presented itself to faculty and students on the first day of fall weekend college this year. Dr. Ortale rose to the challenge with aplomb, offering impacted Practical Nursing Certificate students use of the conference room in her office suite. Baby Monarch (pictured) was on hand to organize everything (and pass out snacks from the President's stash), courses were taught, and – most importantly – nobody was stung!



## Monarch Happenings

The Dorothy A. Connolly annual lecture happened on September 26th. This endowed annual lecture honors longtime College Trustee Dorothy A. Connolly and was intended to amplify the message of the Sisters of Mercy and educate and inspire others through the Mercy mission. This year, Sister Catherine T. Nerney, SSJ Ph.D. spoke on “Why Mercy Becomes Us” in Marian Hall. Sister Nerney serves as a professor of Religious Studies at Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, PA and is the Founder and Director of the Institute for Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

Students in the Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving course in the Summer Scholars program delivered their final presentations in the Pecha Kucha style, a storytelling style of presenting using images and commentary rather than PowerPoint Slides. Presentations advance automatically and are only 6 minutes 40 seconds in length. They require selection of evocative images, concise and clear communication, and much practice to make the most of the time allotted. Each student outlined a 6-point approach to improve female adolescent mental health. They prepared for this activity by reading journal articles detailing interventions proposed to promote female adolescent mental health and their effects, and then designed additional creative approaches that build on existing research. Congratulations to our 2023 Summer Scholars!

On Sunday, August 20, 17 MSOT students, 17 online RN-BS students, and 10 Practical Nurse Certificate program students received their degrees at ceremonies in Fitzgerald Court.

Congratulations to each of them on their exceptional achievement! We are proud of their effort and accomplishment, and wish them well out in the workforce.

The new Center for Academic Innovation, home of the Virtual Reality Nursing Simulation Hub, is scheduled to open on campus January 2024. The VR technology will provide opportunities for students to have immersive experiences in a three-dimensional environment, interacting with patients and a healthcare team and performing virtual clinical interventions.

## Monarch Staff Flutterings

Dr. Jason Coley, Director of the Center for Academic Innovation, just received his Professional Certificate in AR/VR Development and 3D Graphics from NYU Tandon School of Engineering. Congratulations Dr. Coley!

Director of Opportunity Programs Nick Gallagher PT, DPT wrote a blog post about the 2023 Summer Scholars' trip to the Mercy Ecospirituality Center in Vermont this past August.

Dr. Joseph Bocchi, an adjunct professor who is teaching ENG211 Critical Writing and Inquiry this fall, has had his story “Wild Dogs” published in *BlueLine 44*. The magazine features poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and art focused on nature's shaping influence in the Adirondacks and other regions similar in spirit and geography.

## Monarch Alumni News

### MARIA COLLEGE MSOT STUDENT FOUNDS NON-PROFIT

Jodie O'Connell-Ponkos '21 is a current MSOT student who founded her own non-profit in 2009 called Destiny's Ride therapeutic program. The program was founded to help bring a sense of balance to the mind, body, and soul through horses and reconnective healing. To learn more, you may reach out to Jodie at [destinysridetherapeutic@gmail.com](mailto:destinysridetherapeutic@gmail.com)

### 50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION

On Saturday, September 30th a group from the Class of 1970 came together to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Unfortunately, they had to postpone the celebration due to Covid-19. In attendance were Sandra Bishop Esslie, Diane Santandrea Forenzo, Carolyn Hedit, Janet Rybka Kirk, Carol McCarthy, Stephanie Lawrence McGrath, Paula Madej Prendergast, Suzanne Graves Rubino, Christine Gerwin Tierney, Maureen Toohey, and Linda Stapleton Meagher.



A shrinking community of some 20 Sisters of Mercy still reside on campus in the Motherhouse. After a lifetime of service, some Sisters have mobility issues that make venturing out difficult. Dr. Ortale makes it a point to meet with them to keep them abreast of campus activities and share some of her photography. They are still “the heart of the College” and, in Dr. Ortale’s words, are “our best social media advocates.”

These are enjoyable social evenings that occasionally open a window to the Sisters’ personal devotion. During one such visit, Sister Cabrini pulled Dr. Ortale over to a literal window because the view had long been one from which she drew inspiration. But now, out of this window, she saw a

tree showing signs of distress, and she needed a Presidential intervention.

This particular tree had been diligently observed by Sister Cabrini since 1945, and its declining condition, perhaps due to nearby parking spaces, was apparent. Consistent with Dr. Ortale’s penchant for action rather than words, she followed up in person with the grounds crew, who were ironically culling trees for construction, to assess its condition and potential remedies. It was during this conversation that the tree was given its fitting nickname, the “Cabrini Tree.”

But before a plan to nurse the tree back to health could be implemented, a severe windstorm felled

the now-famous tree, damaging a student car in the process (those parking spaces, again) but, luckily, harming no one except Sister Cabrini, of course.

Dr. Ortale took immediate action to commemorate Sister Cabrini’s 78-year relationship with the tree by securing its “heart,” which -- in a gesture profoundly moving to the Sisters -- she hand delivered to the Motherhouse. A cross made from the tree was also commissioned for Sister Cabrini, and she was gifted a new sapling to foster before permanent planting in her honor along Pine Tree Lane.

Thus, the Cabrini Tree lives once more and will forever embody the connection between the Sisters and our President and their joint commitment to “Care for the Earth.”



78 years

Sisters of Mercy

THE TALE OF THE CABRINI TREE.



The ultimate symbol of transformation, resilience and grace, now hangs in Dr. Lynn Ortale's office.

Participants from the Arc Lexington Transitions Program visited Maria College to present their original monarch butterfly painting to President Lynn Ortale. As a symbol of transformation, resilience, and grace, the monarch butterfly is the mascot for our College, and this painting will grace the cover of an upcoming Maria College publication. Thank you to Arc Lexington Executive Director Shaloni Winston who commissioned the artwork in honor of Dr. Ortale's inauguration, and the three artists - Rachael Paz, Erin O'Melia, and Tamika Taranto (not pictured) - for this exceptional gift! Maria College is grateful

for the work of @thearclexington, which provides supports and services for approximately 1,300 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Fulton, Albany and Schoharie Counties. Executive Director Shaloni Winston received an honorary doctorate from Maria College at our 2023 Commencement, delivering a powerful address calling on graduates to become "champions for those who need it most."



Artists - Rachael Paz and Erin O'Melia present Dr. Lynn Ortale a painting of a Monarch Butterfly that symbolizes student transformation when attending Maria College.







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