



GHSON Alumni Newsletter

SPRING 2020

WELCOME NEW DIRECTOR



Rebecca Sherwood, RN, MSN, Class of 1998, has been named as the new Director of Graham Hospital School of Nursing.

Here is Becky's nursing journey in her own words:

Right out of nursing school, I started in long term care at Farmington Country Manor, earned my restorative nursing certificate, and had my first role in middle management.

The next stop began my longest nursing history which was here at Graham in surgery, February 2000 – October 2016. During this time, I began as a surgical staff nurse and climbed the ladder into the Surgery Coordinator role.

February 2003 – December 2006, I picked up a moonlighting job for additional experience (and fertility insurance). I worked at OSF in the emergency department as a full time weekend staff nurse on 3rd shift – boy did I gain tons of experience while also perfecting my skills during this time. Such great learning and support from another fabulous group of coworkers, many who became lifelong friends!

I then made the decision to advance my education and earned my MSN in early 2009 with hopes of joining GHSON as a faculty member. Since there were no openings, I began teaching online through University of Phoenix. In late 2010, my nursing career was somewhat rerouted as the Director of Surgery decided to retire. After working in the department for many years watching Kathy McFerren do what she did best and having my peers encourage me to apply, I accepted the position as Director of Surgery.

A few years into the Director of Surgery role, a personal surgical complication led me to an unexpected absence and recovery process that left me unable to continue full time in the surgical role. In 2014, I was asked to speak at Graham's graduation on behalf of the senior class – my speech was entitled: Making a Difference. Let me tell you, fighting for your life and having such fabulous teams of healthcare providers (including some of those students) keep you alive and fighting definitely makes a difference in your life and how you view the world. It was at this time that I made the decision to leave Graham in order to fulfill my desire to use my MSN and become a nurse educator.

Excellence in Nursing Education Since 1909

IN SYMPATHY

*Class of 1945
Freda Blair
December 20, 2019*

*Class of 1945
Violet Wages
January 28, 2020*

*Class of 1972
Jo Dolengowski
September 14, 2016*

*Class of 1973
Sue Barrington
November 27, 2019*

*We pass on this information
as soon as we hear it which is
sometimes several years
after the fact.*

ALUMNI DUES

Dues for the Alumni Association are \$10 per year paid annually in February or spring. The dues go toward scholarships, memorials and other projects for the school if funds are available.

Please send your dues made payable to GHSON Alumni to:

*GHSON Alumni
Attn: Cindy Brown
210 W. Walnut
Canton, IL 61520*

Upcoming Dates to Note:

- April 6 Alumni Meeting, 6 pm with a tour of The Canton Heritage Museum which as a room devoted to healthcare*
- May 8 Graduation, 7 pm, @ Wesley United Methodist Church, Canton, IL*
- June 4 Alumni Meeting, 6 pm*

New Dual Enrollment Opportunity...

Our school continually looks for innovative ways to support students in their educational endeavors. The new dual enrollment partnership between Illinois State University's Mennonite College of Nursing and Graham Hospital School of Nursing is now official. Students have the unique opportunity to simultaneously enroll in both programs and begin working on their Bachelor's degree before graduating from GHSON. Many of the courses they will be able to complete online.

Of course, we have long had an articulation agreement with ISU for alumni to complete a BSN after receiving their diploma from Graham. For more information on what ISU Mennonite College of Nursing has to offer our graduates, contact Em McMahon at 309-438-7400 or on their website at Nursing.IllinoisState.edu/RN-BSN.

NEW DIRECTOR CONTINUED...

In July 2015, I began my teaching role at Spoon River College, but remained interim Director of Surgery at Graham until the new Director could get there in October. It was a balancing stent, but well worth it because I loved my Graham family and was finding it hard to actually leave completely. As a result, I also decided to remain as a PRN staff member in surgery; however, in late 2016, I had to make the decision to leave completely to spend more time with my dad who was suffering from Alzheimer's Disease so that I could be present and help my mom with his care.

I taught at Spoon River just shy of five years. It was such a rewarding position and I absolutely loved what I did. Seeing students reach their "aha" moments and helping them to learn while reaching success was the absolute best feeling in the world. I knew at that point that I was meant to give back to the students and share my knowledge and experiences as both a nurse and a patient – believe me, my illness made me a better nurse and an even better educator as I was able to share perspectives on both sides of the fence to enhance student learning. It was rewarding and therapeutic as I continued to recover from my illness. Even more humbling was that the students loved my teaching style and personality so much, they nominated me for the ICCTA Educator of the Year award which I did win in 2018, the same year I had earned tenure! Wow...this was a pinch me moment. How do you win an award for doing what you love?!?!?

In 2019, I was made aware of the potential for Sue's retirement and began the thought process of "what if...what if I could be the Director...what if this is what I was meant to do...what if I could fulfill this role and eventually retire from the place where I began my nursing career"...and so it began.

Now that I am Director of GHSON, here are some thoughts:

I am thrilled and so very proud to have returned to my alma mater, Graham Hospital School of Nursing. It still seems unreal to me that I am now Director of the program that jumpstarted my nursing career. I suppose you could say that my nursing career has become full circle since I began at GHSON back in 1995 and hope to retire from GHSON sometime around 2035, unless of course, I decide to try and beat Sue's reign of 27 years Directing the school – just kidding, Sue! I believe that record will be yours to keep.

I am honored to have been lucky enough to follow Sue in this role, especially since she will remain in the school to mentor me and show me the ropes. I will never pretend to fully fill Sue's shoes; however, it is humbling to know that others here at Graham have the confidence in me that I can follow in her footsteps as I lead the school and carry on the tradition of success. I believe Graham Hospital School of Nursing has at least *another* 110 years of nursing education, so let's keep the torch lit and protect it along the way. I am proud to be in this new role and thankful to be working with such a fantastic team of faculty and staff as well as a revolving door of wonderful students, hopefully for many years to come. #GHSONstrong #Grahamily



GHSON Ranked #3 in the State of Illinois

The 2020 list of nursing school rankings by RegisteredNursing.org came out in February. Out of 78 schools, GHSON moved up from #11 in 2019 to #3 in the State of Illinois!

According to their website, selecting the best nursing school in Illinois is not an easy task. They look for schools that support their students towards licensure and beyond by using current and historical NCLEX-RN pass rates.

GHSON would not have accomplished this ranking without the hard work of our faculty, staff and alumni. Also, a BIG THANK YOU to our more recent graduates who did the work needed to pass their licensure exam on the first try.

You can find the full list of rankings at:
<https://www.registerednursing.org/state/illinois/#top>

Transcript Requests....

We get many calls asking “What do I have to do to request a transcript?”. There are a few ways to go about requesting a transcript:

1. Print the transcript request form found on the school’s website. The form can be found under the Quick Links tab on the top bar menu or the Alumni tab at the bottom of the home page. Fill out the form and mail to us with the \$5.00 fee.
2. Email pritter@grahamhospital.org with your request. Be sure to include the year you graduated and where you need the transcript sent. You may mail your \$5.00 or pay by phone with the hospital cashier (309-647-5240 ext. 2221).
3. Stop by the school office to fill out the request form and pay the fee.

Transcripts typically are mailed out within 1 or 2 days of the request.

Refer a student to GHSON

Alumni who refer a prospective student that is then admitted to GHSON will receive a **\$25 gift card**. Tell them to mention you when they request information about the school so we know who referred them. Prospective students can request information by phone or through our website.

(309) 647-4086

Or

www.grahamschoolofnursing.org