

A SALUTE TO NURSES

MAY 6, 2026

An Eagle News Publication

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Shaina Ellis Named 2026 Joan Fernbach Kingson Award recipient

Congratulations to Shaina Ellis, Nursing Assistant 2, who was selected as the 2026 recipient of the Joan Fernbach Kingson Award.

Shaina was nominated by Stephanie Rabbo, RN, on 5 South Irving, who remarked that consistently goes beyond expectations to support patients and families with compassion, attentiveness, and heart.

“Shaina is deeply attentive to patients’ physical needs while also recognizing the emotional and social aspects of care, answering call bells promptly, offering reassurance, and ensuring patients feel safe, heard, and respected,” the nomination said. “Their proactive approach not only prevents harm, but also builds trust with families and strengthens their connection to the care team.”

The Joan Fernbach Kingson Award was established to recognize service or technical workers like Shaina, whose special interactions with patients and families give vivid expression to the values of care which Kingson was committed to in her work with children and families.

Those values include treating each patient as an individual, respecting the social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical needs of others and welcoming families, especially the young, into the caring process.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Shaina Ellis, Nursing Assistant 2, was selected as the 2026 recipient of the Joan Fernbach Kingson Award.

The often-unseen gifts of service and technical workers acknowledged by this award include the gift of careful listening, the simple joy of human-to-human conversation, the sharing of silence, or the warmth of touch. In giving of themselves so generously to others, awardees help sustain the essence of humanity and exemplify the best traditions of Crouse Health.

About the Joan Fernbach Kingson Award

This annual cash prize is made possible by the family and friends of former Crouse Hospital patient Joan Fernbach Kingson, a nurse and educator who passed away in 2001. Syracuse University professor Eric Kingson was her husband and is the author of “Lessons from Joan, Living and Loving with Cancer, a Husband’s Story.”

Service or technical workers at the hospital are nominated by their peers and then selected by a committee for their involvement in the patient care process that gives vivid expression to the values of care that the late Kingson was committed to in her work with children and families.



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IS NURSING IN YOUR FUTURE?

Educational paths to follow if nursing is your goal

The field of nursing is vast. While providing medical assistance and support to patients is at the heart of any nursing career, the road to becoming a nurse varies.

There are many pathways to becoming a nurse, and each requires a specific amount of education, training and testing.

Here's a deep dive into the various professional degrees associated with nursing, courtesy of NurseJournal.org and Nurse.org.

Certified Nursing Assistant

A certified nursing assistant is how many people first enter the field of nursing.

CNAs are not nurses, but they help nurses provide medical care.

Becoming a CNA requires completion of a program that can last 12 weeks, a CNA certification exam and state (provincial) licensing.

Licensed Vocational or Practical Nurse

To become an LVN or LPN, individuals must finish a one-year program to receive a diploma, and pass the NCLEX-PN licensing exam. State or provincial licensing also is required.

Registered Nurse

Prospective registered



FILE PHOTO

There are many professional degrees associated with nursing

How to ensure you choose the right specialty

Opportunities abound within the nursing profession. Nursing shortages have stretched the profession thin in both the United States and Canada. For example, a report in fall of 2022 indicated a nursing shortage was directly responsible for the closure of 16 emergency departments in Ontario, Canada's largest province. Warnings regarding a potential nursing shortfall have been sounded for years in the United States as well, with estimates

from the country's Bureau of Labor and Statistics projecting more than 200,000 job openings per year over a decade-long period beginning in 2021 and ending in 2031.

Though the Ontario closures illustrate how nursing shortages pose a public health problem, those shortages also present opportunities for individuals considering a career in nursing. Nursing is essentially an umbrella term for a career path includes an array of spe-

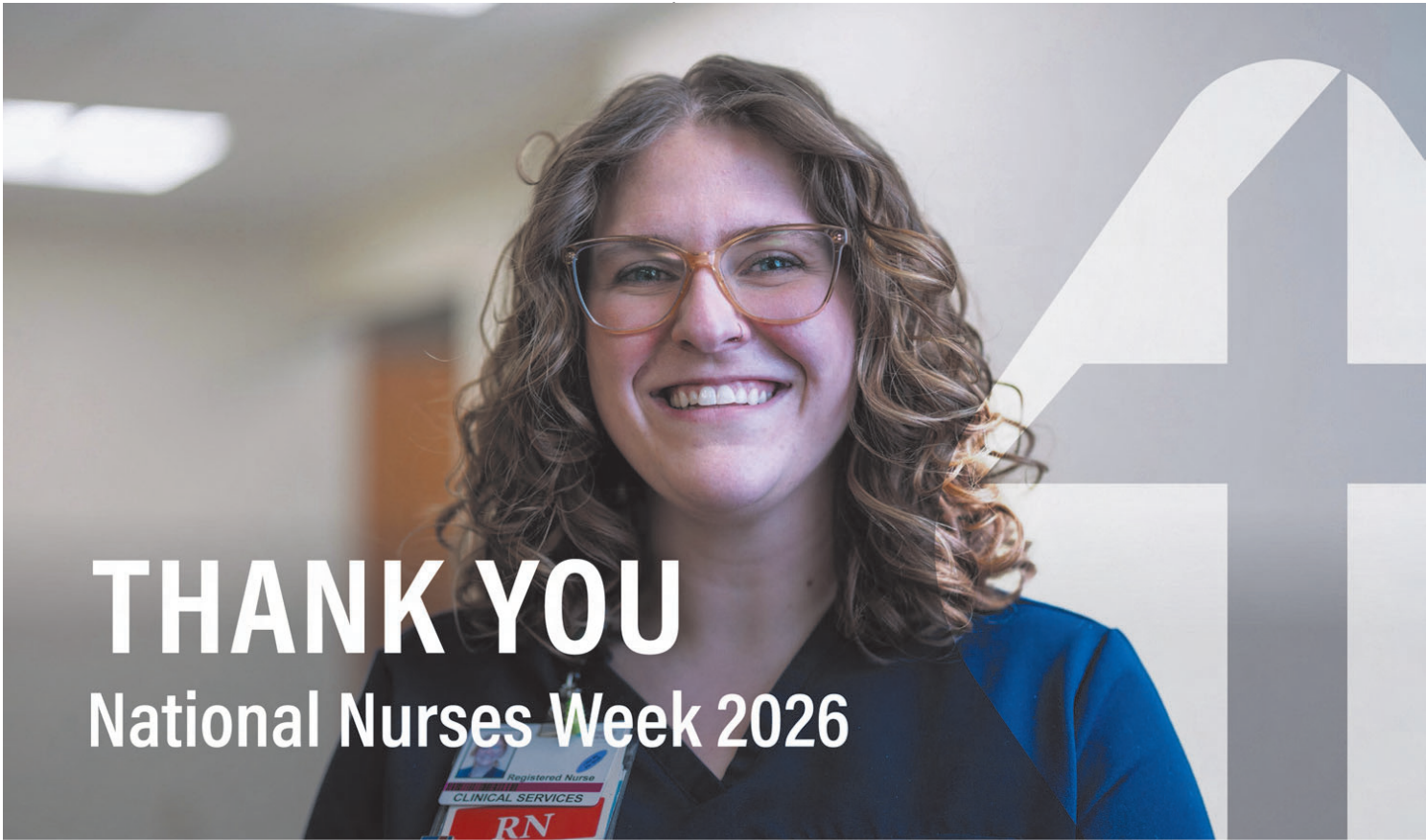
cialties, and aspiring nurses may need a little help choosing the right path within the field.

Consider your potential schedule

The pandemic highlighted just how essential nurses are to public health, and many specialties within the field do not have a down season. If routine is something you aspire to in order to create work-life balance, then certain specialties within nursing may

SPECIALTY • PAGE 7

PATHS • PAGE 9



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Specialty • FROM PAGE 4

be more appealing than others.

For example, school nurses and nurses who work in doctor's offices generally work 9-to-5 shifts, which can afford such professionals the same work-life balance as other professions. If you thrive on a fast-paced environment where routine is less important, then a career as an emergency room nurse might merit consideration.

Identify why you want to be a nurse

Opportunity for career growth and earning potential are good reasons to pur-

sue any career, but those are not the factors that compel many people to initially consider a career in nursing.

Many nurses were first inspired by a personal experience, such as helping an elderly relative.

Others may have been inspired by a love of children and a desire to help kids recover from illnesses. When faced with the decision of which path to specialize in, aspiring nurses can benefit from identifying what compelled them to pursue nursing in the first place and then look for an opportunity that aligns with that inspiration.

Determine the requirements

Education requirements vary widely within the field of nursing. Some specialties require a two-year associate's degree while others may require considerably more formal education. For example, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners indicates a nurse practitioner must complete a master's or doctoral degree program and have advanced clinical training beyond their initial professional registered nurse preparation. Aspiring nurses can identify the educational requirements of various nursing specialties

to help them decide how big a commitment they're willing to make.

Recognize you can pivot

Aspiring nurses also should recognize they can pivot to a new specialty if they have a hard time identifying a career path when they begin their formal schooling. In fact, many nurses find that on-the-job experience is the best way to identify which specialties appeal to them and which don't.

Nursing is a vast field loaded with opportunities. Aspiring nurses can consider a host of factors as they try to identify which career path to take.



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The evolving role of the oncology nurse

HOACNY nurses are compassionate caregivers, skilled clinicians, supportive leaders and emerging advocates

BY DENISE LOUGEE, RPA-C

HOACNY DIRECTOR OF NURSING

In community oncology, nursing is more than a role—it is a commitment to walking alongside patients and families through some of life's most challenging moments. This year, we are proud to spotlight two exceptional nurses whose dedication to compassionate care, professional growth and emerging leadership exemplifies the very best of our profession: Barbara Anne Neuenhoff, RN, and Nicole Renaud, RN.

At Hematology Oncology Associates of CNY, both Barbara Anne and Nicole work across care settings, serving as both treating and charge nurses within the infusion center and oncology nurse navigators in the clinic setting. Over the past year, they have each stepped into nurse manager positions, expanding their impact beyond bedside care to mentoring colleagues, strengthening team dynamics and helping shape the future of oncology nursing within our organization.

Barbara Anne's journey into nursing was not a straight path, but one marked by persistence and purpose. After years of searching for a fulfilling career, she found her calling in nursing school, where a preceptor rotation on an oncology unit sparked a deep and lasting passion. That experience ultimately led her to oncology, where she found her professional home.

Her connection to patients is at the heart of everything she does. As Barbara shares, "Each patient is beyond special and you truly walk through every aspect of the good and bad with them during their cancer diagnosis. My patients help to reframe my own thinking and show that every moment, every word, every minute is truly valuable."

In her transition to leadership, Barbara has embraced the opportunity to grow while supporting others.

"Leadership has helped me increase my knowledge and confidence in nursing and to really see the big picture," she explains. "I strive to be a consistent support and mentor for nurses as the

world of oncology can be so emotionally charged. Leadership also allows me to lead by example and provide patients the dignity and care they deserve in their journey."

Nicole's path into oncology nursing reflects a similar dedication to growth and patient-centered care. She began her career as a licensed practical nurse in a pediatric office before returning to school to become a registered nurse. After gaining valuable experience in emergency medicine, she found herself drawn to a setting where she could spend more meaningful time with patients.

"While I learned so much in the ER, one thing that always stood out to me was how rushed patient interactions could feel," Nicole recalls. "It's tough knowing your patients deserve more time and attention than you're sometimes able to give." This realization led her to oncology nursing—a specialty she quickly came to love, despite having no prior experience in the field.

Nicole found not only a passion for patient care, but also a strong sense of community among her colleagues.

"What keeps my passion strong is the gratitude from patients during some of their most difficult moments, along with the close bonds formed among oncology nurses who share these daily experiences," she says. "I truly can't see myself in any other specialty."

Recently stepping into a nurse manager role, Nicole continues to balance direct patient care with leadership responsibilities. Her ability to remain connected to both patients and staff allows her to lead with empathy, insight, and authenticity.

Looking ahead, both Barbara and Nicole are preparing to expand their impact even further through involvement with patient advocacy initiatives, through COA. Their commitment to advocacy reflects a broader vision of nursing—one that extends beyond clinical care to championing the needs and experiences of the oncology community.

Barbara and Nicole represent the evolving role of the oncology nurse:



SUBMITTED PHOTO

At Hematology Oncology Associates of CNY, both Barbara Anne and Nicole work across care settings, serving as both treating and charge nurses within the infusion center and oncology nurse navigators in the clinic setting. Over the past year, they have each stepped into nurse manager positions, expanding their impact beyond bedside care to mentoring colleagues, strengthening team dynamics, and helping shape the future of oncology nursing within our organization.

compassionate caregiver, skilled clinician, supportive leader, and emerging advocate. Their journeys remind us that nursing is not only about treating illness,

but about honoring humanity, fostering connection, and making a meaningful difference—one patient, one family, and one moment at a time.

Paths. FROM PAGE 4

nurses can take two different paths. They can opt to get an associate's degree in nursing (ADN), which involves a two- to three-year program. After completion of that program, candidates must pass the NCLEX-RN exam. Aspiring RNs also can pursue four-year degrees and earn a bachelor's of science in nursing (BSN). They must then pass the NCLEX-RN exam. Those enrolled in associate's or bachelor's programs can expect to take an array of classes, some of which may include Nursing Care for Elder Adults and Mental and Behavioral Health Nursing. There is evidence that patient outcomes may be improved under the care of BSN-prepared nurses, according to

the American Association of Colleges and Nurses. As a result, many hospitals prefer BSN-prepared applicants. Those with a BSN also may be able to advance to leadership and administrative roles more easily.

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse

Prospective APRNs will need a master's of science in nursing to pursue this career path. This involves a post-graduate program that will require in-person clinical hours and a passing grade in a certification exam in the area of specialization. Others go further to obtain a doctorate of nursing practice degree, which is a bit more involved. APRNs can enjoy careers as Nurse Practitioners,

Clinical Nurse Leaders, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists or Certified Nurse Midwives, with salaries averaging around \$115,000. Those with MSN or DNP degrees also may take non-clinical routes, becoming administrators, informaticists, educators, or researchers. Individuals thinking about nursing careers can do their research to learn which level of schooling best aligns with their interests. More information is available at Nurse.org.



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Top-notch nurse communication

Community Memorial Hospital receives 5-star rating

Community Memorial (CMH) recently announced it has been recognized as one of only nine hospitals in New York State to receive a 5-star rating for Nurse Communication from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), as reported by Becker's Hospital Review.

This prestigious distinction is based on patient experience data collected through the nationally recognized Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey.

The 5-star Nurse Communication rating reflects patients' feedback on how often nurses treated them with courtesy and respect, listened carefully, and explained things in a clear and understandable way.

"This achievement speaks directly to the compassionate, patient-centered care our nurses provide every day," said Heather Bernard, chief nursing officer and vice president of clinical services. "To be one of only nine hospitals statewide to earn this level of recognition is an extraordinary honor and a true testament to the professionalism, dedication, and

heart of our nursing staff."

The CMS star ratings are widely regarded as one of the most trusted measures of hospital quality and patient experience in the nation.

Earning a 5-star rating in Nurse Communication places CMH among an elite group of hospitals recognized for excellence in bedside care and meaningful patient engagement.

"Our nurses are the foundation of the care we deliver," Bernard said. "This recognition affirms what our patients already know — that they are heard, respected, and supported when they come through our doors."

CMH remains committed to advancing quality, safety, and compassionate care for the communities it serves and is honored to be recognized at the highest level for nurse communication.

Community Memorial offers primary and specialty care across six locations—Hamilton, Cazenovia, Morrisville, Munnsville, Sherrill, New Hartford, Utica and Waterville—and continues to expand services to meet the needs of the region.

For updates and news, visit communitymemorial.org.

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THIS NURSES WEEK, we celebrate the compassion, strength, and expertise our nurses bring every single day.

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Proud to build the future of healthcare Together!

Hospice CNY and of the Finger Lakes gets new CEO

The Hospice CNY and of the Finger Lakes Board of Directors has named Susan (Sue) Litera the new Chief Executive Officer.

Litera's background as a CEO, combined with a deep passion for the mission of Hospice will help to further advance the organization.

"We are thrilled to welcome Sue as our new CEO," said Jen Pichoske, Hospice Board of Trustees president. "She will bring empathy, experience, enthusiasm, great communication skills, strategic vision and a fresh energy to our organization."

Litera assumed the role April 20 and is managing all day-to-day operations for the agency supporting end-of-life care in Onondaga, Madison, Oswego and Cayuga counties.

With over 25 years of experience in the non-profit sector, Litera is a passionate and dedicated leader who strives to make a positive impact on people's lives. With a proven track record of strong management and leadership skills, strate-



Susan Litera

HOSPICE • PAGE 15

CELEBRATING



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ELEVATING NURSING EXCELLENCE

Bryant & Stratton College launches Sigma Honor Society Chapter

Bryant & Stratton College on April 23 celebrated its Alpha Gamma Pi Inaugural Chartering and Induction Ceremony for the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma), one of the most prestigious nursing honor societies in the world. The ceremony was held at The Vineyard, 312 Lakeside Road, Syracuse.

Bryant & Stratton College Alpha Gamma Pi inductees included Chelsea Bisbo, Tracie Bowers, Clark Gayne, Bailey Rogers, Zhasheyl Hall Rodriguez, Amy Homer, Alicia Nitzke, Katie Phillips and Nastasia Torrence.

Sigma has a long-standing commitment to advancing nursing excellence and improving global health outcomes. Since 1936, Sigma has been a pioneer in funding nursing research and continues to invest more than \$200,000 annually in research grants, scholarships, and awards.

“Establishing the Alpha Gamma Pi Chapter marks a major milestone for our nursing program by connecting our students and alumni to a global network focused on leadership, excellence, and career advancement in healthcare,” said Kara Evans, PhD, RN, Bryant & Stratton College Nursing Program director. “This reflects our commitment to academic excellence and preparing practice-ready nurses.”

Inductees at the event included a select group of Bryant & Stratton College nursing students who have demonstrated academic excellence who were also recognized for their professional achievements. To be considered for undergraduate membership, nursing students must have completed half of their curriculum, rank in the top 35% of their graduating class and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale.)

About Sigma

Founded in 1922 by six nursing students, Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma) has more than 100,000 active members and 600 chapters at institutions of higher education and healthcare partners from Armenia, Australia and Botswana to Thailand, the United States and Wales. Sigma members include clinical nurses and administrators, academic nurse educators and researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs and others working to fulfill the organization’s vision of connected, empowered nurse leaders transforming global healthcare.

About Bryant & Stratton College

Founded in 1854, Bryant & Stratton College, a non-profit institution, has built its reputation and success on a commitment to excellence and high standards.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bryant & Stratton College on April 23 celebrated its Alpha Gamma Pi Inaugural Chartering and Induction Ceremony for the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma), one of the most prestigious nursing honor societies in the world. Pictured were some of the inductees, who were on hand for the ceremony.

Bryant & Stratton College prepares skilled, compassionate nurses

BY DR. KARA EVANS, PHD, RN

Nurses are highly skilled professionals who blend compassion with data-informed practice. To prepare these well-rounded clinicians, nursing education emphasizes critical thinking alongside empathetic care for patients and families. At Bryant & Stratton College (B&SC) in Liverpool, nursing students complete hundreds of hours practicing compassionate care through high-fidelity simulation and real-world clinical rotations.

Nursing degree programs vary in design, but all must meet accreditation standards set by agencies such as the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

At many institutions, prospective nursing students complete prerequisites before being considered for admission to a bachelor’s program. According to NurseJournal, requirements may include science and general education coursework with a grade point average (GPA) equivalent to a B. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at B&SC is direct entry, with no prerequisites required. Students begin nursing classes in their first year, learning to think like a nurse and applying that mindset throughout their education.

Experiences that closely mirror real healthcare settings are considered high fidelity, offering a safe yet realistic environment for skill-building. In the

nursing simulation lab, students encounter a wide range of patient-care scenarios. According to HealthySimulation, simulated environments create immersive learning experiences. Nurse educators program manikins to present clinical challenges such as respiratory distress or heart failure, and the manikin’s condition can improve or decline based on students’ decisions and interventions. Students can also participate in scenarios such as a simulated birth.

Clinical education is another essential component of preparing future nurses. B&SC students complete rotations in pediatrics, labor and delivery, mental health, community health and more. Healthcare partners—including Crouse

Hospital, Oswego Health, SUNY Upstate and St. Joseph’s Health Hospital—benefit as many B&SC nursing students remain in the community for employment after graduation. With a licensure exam first-time pass rate of 96.23% in 2025, B&SC graduates are well prepared to step into their roles.

In celebration of Nurses Week, B&SC recognizes its exceptional students, graduates, nurse educators and clinical partners. Together, we are helping ensure the healthcare needs of our community are met.

Dr. Kara Evans, PhD, RN, is nursing program director, Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing, Bryant & Stratton College.



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Nursing opens doors to an extraordinary career path

As we salute nurses this May, it is important to note that a nursing degree can open the door to an extraordinary range of career paths within healthcare. Just ask Michele Erwin, RN, director of nursing at St. Camillus Residential Healthcare Facility.

“I started my path as a nursing professional more than 20 years ago at St. Joseph’s College of Nursing,” said Erwin. “And the journey has been not only interesting but extremely fulfilling.”

Erwin is currently the director of nursing at St. Camillus, where she oversees 200 staff members on her nursing team, including registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses, (LPNs) and certified nursing assistants, (CNAs) for the short-term and skilled nursing facility. In her role, she oversees all nursing operations to ensure high-quality, resident-centered care. She provides clinical leadership, oversees nursing staff, ensures compliance with state and federal regulations, and promotes a culture of safety, professionalism, and quality care with her nursing team.

While working at St. Camillus, Erwin has held key positions including director of nursing, assistant director of nursing, nurse manager and infection prevention/employee health. In each capacity, she has demonstrated strong clinical expertise, thoughtful leadership and an unwavering focus on patient safety and staff well-being.

“My personal journey demonstrates how the field of nursing offers significant opportunities and strong potential for career growth,” said Erwin. “Nurses can advance into leadership, education, specialized clinical roles, or administrative positions while contributing to improved patient outcomes and organizational success.”

Although she has enjoyed each of her positions at St. Camillus, when asked what role she is most passionate about, her response comes easily.

“I’ve truly love being director of nursing overseeing short-term rehabilitation. It is extremely rewarding as a professional to make a meaningful difference in patients’ recovery,” said Erwin.

As for the best part of the job? She says it’s teamwork.

“The most rewarding part is supporting the nursing team to drive the provision of care and promote the overall patient experience. The St. Camillus team members are some of the most knowledgeable, kind, and professional people I have ever worked with in my decades nursing,” said Erwin.

Advice for new nurses as they begin their careers?

“As a nurse you have an expansive number of choices for the type of nursing you want to explore. Do exactly that -Explore!”

Michele Erwin, RN, is director of nursing at St. Camillus Residential Healthcare Facility.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Hospice • FROM PAGE 11

gic planning and workplace culture, she feels well prepared for role.

“Having a personal connection to the mission of Hospice, I have seen firsthand how this work impacts families’ lives. I feel incredibly lucky to lead this team who do extraordinary work each day. My job is to serve

them so they can support our patients and their family members.” Litera said.

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CENTRAL NEW YORK HONOR GUARD

Services we provide:

- Attend all services wearing the traditional white uniforms
- Recite “A Nurses Prayer” at the funeral or special service
- Present the Florence Nightingale lamp to the family.
- Place a white rose on the nurse’s casket at the end of the service, which signifies their devotion to their profession.
- Provide a presence at the visitation.

OUR MOTTO IS NO NURSE IS FORGOTTEN.

Who We Serve

Any Registered Nurse (RN), or Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) funeral. Our services are free, with absolutely no cost to the family. Donations are greatly appreciated. 100% of all donations go directly to the purchase of supplies to ensure that all Nurses are honored.

To arrange for a tribute, please contact your funeral director.

For more information:

Call: Faith Terry at 315-243-7537
Email: cnysnursesonorguard@gmail.com
Facebook: Central New York/Syracuse Nurse Honor Guard

We serve the Central New York area

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Honoring individuals who have dedicated their lives to the Nursing Profession.



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