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RETIREES Association NEWSLETTER

Volume 18

March 2021

A LIFETIME BOND WITH ALMA MATER

By Thomas G. Burke, Ph.D. '68C, '71G



When I stepped onto the Queens, NY, campus of St. John's University as a 17-year-old freshman in the Fall of 1964, I had no idea that the University would still be an important part of my life more than five decades later. I have discovered that no matter where you go or what you do, the St. John's family bond is forever.

I grew up in Queens, and like most of the

University's students then and now, was the first in my family to attend college. I was very active on campus as a founding brother of the Epsilon Theta chapter of the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity and involved in a host of other activities. I earned an undergraduate degree in psychology from St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and a master's in clinical psychology from the College's graduate division, later earning a Ph.D. and an additional master's at other institutions.

I had a wonderfully satisfying career in higher education, beginning as an adjunct instructor at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) in Old Westbury, NY, and eventually was named Senior Vice President for Student Services. After 27 years at NYIT, I decided that it was time to return to the University that had given me so much.

In 2004, I joined St. John's Division of Institutional Advancement as Senior Project Manager. I had a wide range of responsibilities, from crafting speeches for the President and senior members of the University's administration, to creating print and electronic solicitation messages, to writing the majority of articles for the St. John's University *Alumni* magazine.

Being back at alma mater was absolutely terrific. It felt like I had never left, and it was fun to interact with some of the professors that I had as a student.

Having the opportunity to work closely with people on all levels, from the President to students, reinforced for me the uniqueness that permeates every aspect of the University. St. John's is truly a special place.

MESSAGE FROM SUSAN M. DAMIANI '87CBA

Director of Gift Planning/The McCallen Society



I pray you and your families are doing well. Since we are unable to get together for the Retirees Association Luncheon this year, I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter to stay connected and informed.

2021 is off to an exciting start. Last fall, St. John's University named Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., as its 18th president. Fr. Shanley previously worked at Providence College; he was the 12th and longest-serving President in their history.

I have enjoyed staying connected with you all through the St. John's Power Hour Series. To register for our upcoming virtual programs, please check the calendar enclosed. Also, please remember to look for our postings on the RA Facebook page.

Stay safe, and I look forward to seeing all of you in the near future.

JOIN THE ST. JOHN'S RETIREES ASSOCIATION FACEBOOK PAGE TODAY!

facebook.com/stjohnsretireesassociation
or @StJohnsRetireesAssociation
www.stjohns.edu/retirees

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW
Power Hour Series
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour

St. John's University Alumni Book Club
www.stjohns.edu/bookclub

Every Saturday until the end of May
from 10 to 11 a.m.
Power Hour Series: Josephine's Total Body
Fitness Class for Active Adults!
www.stjohns.edu/josephinesfitnessclass

Monday, April 19, from 1:50 to 3:25 p.m.
"Who was St John's?: A Historical Audit":
Part 3, "Student Activism after Vatican II"
www.150.stjohns.edu

Tuesday, April 20, from 1 to 2 p.m.
Virtual exhibition tour with Owen Duffy,
Director, Dr. M. T. Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour59

Monday, April 26, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.
(Registration is required by April 19.)
Virtual cooking class hosted by
Acquista Trattoria

Tuesday, April 27, from 1 to 2 p.m.
Power Hour Series: Virtual Exhibition of
"Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950-2019"
at the Whitney Museum
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour61

Thursday, April 29, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Vincentian Chair of Social Justice,
"Women of Color in the Academy":
Lecture 4, "Dr. Naa Oyo Kwate on 'If Black
lives don't matter in real life, why would
they on the page?' Navigating racism in
scientific research funding and publishing"
www.stjohns.edu/vincentiancenter

Tuesday, May 4, from 1 to 2 p.m.
Power Hour Series: Harlem J. Gunness,
Ph.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor and
Director, Public Health Program
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour

Tuesday, May 11, from 1 to 2 p.m.
Power Hour Series: Virtual Tour of
Queens Botanical Garden
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour65

Tuesday, May 18, from 1 to 2 p.m.
Power Hour Series: "Fashion Trends
at St. John's: 1960s-80s"
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour67

Monday, May 31
Memorial Day
University Closed

Sunday, June 6-Saturday, June 12
Grand Alumni Homecoming Weekend
www.stjohns.edu/homecoming

Tuesday, June 8, from 1 to 2 p.m.
Power Hour Series: "It's Your Camino:
One Couple's 500-mile Pilgrimage
across Spain"
www.stjohns.edu/powerhour70

For more events, visit
www.stjohns.edu/alumnierevents.

For more information and to RSVP, contact the Office of Gift Planning at 718-990-8423; giftplanning@stjohns.edu.

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Looking Forward to Brighter Times

By Simon G. Møller, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs



As the global health crisis continues, we have all been forced to think differently. Differently in a way that has been challenging but at the same time rewarding. I say rewarding because of how the entire St. John's community came together during the fall semester to ensure that we could safely welcome our students back onto campus for a new academic year, albeit in lower numbers, and stay open for the entire semester.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to our students, faculty, administrators, and staff for their resilience and commitment to our University.

There is no question that the Fall 2020 semester was very different from our usual Fall semesters. Students traditionally immersed in classroom activities on campus with their fellow students found themselves taking a mixture of in-person courses, rotating hybrid courses, and online courses from their homes. Despite this mixture of course modalities we are proud that we were able to offer almost 70% of our students at least one in-person, on campus

experience during the Fall in order to foster the community spirit that is so important. This speaks measures to the hard work by faculty, administrators, and staff and we have continued these efforts so that students were also able to select a spectrum of different course modalities for the Spring 2021 semester.

Health and safety is our primary focus as we continue through the Spring semester. To this end we have established a clinical laboratory on campus offering extensive COVID-19 testing for students and employees so that we can identify and trace any new infections. This is not a simple task but such an important one as it instills a sense of security and peace of mind within our campus community.

This Spring marks a new beginning at St. John's as we welcomed our new President, Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P. to campus. His wisdom, expertise, and vision will set a new and exciting course for our University, bringing us to new heights. We are so thankful for Fr. Shanley.

We have much work to do. In fact, our work is never done, but we are filled with hope. Although the winter months can be dark, we are heading towards brighter times; brighter times for St. John's and our community.

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Overview of COVID-19 Study Results

By CDR (Ret.) Harlem J. Gunness, Ph.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor and Director, Public Health Program



I administered the COVID-19 Readiness (Preparedness) Assessment between September and December of 2020 to assess the preparedness of constituents in some of the hardest hit communities in Queens, NY: Corona, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. The survey was disseminated to residents in the community by elected officials and other community leaders through social media posting, newsletters, emails, and word of mouth.

Of the 651 participants who responded, 516 were qualified to participate in the study, and 306 completed the survey (totaling a 59 percent response rate). The results reveal that there is a significant association between the lack of preparedness in these communities. Some of the shortfalls include limited COVID-19 prevention health education, food insecurity, restricted isolation capacity, limited medication access, lack of social support, and inadequate sanitation resources. A large majority of participants (62 percent) learned something new about preparing for the pandemic by completing the survey, which suggests a wide gap in COVID-19 health education and information targeting residents living in crowded, urban housing conditions.

Furthermore, significant preparedness disparities were discovered among racial and ethnic groups. The results showed LatinX participants were drastically less prepared for the second wave of COVID-19 than other racial groups. In addition, study participants who were not prepared in one area for the pandemic were more likely not to be prepared in other areas as well. For example, the results noted that "participants who do not have someone else to run errands were 2.5 times less likely to avoid preparing foods when sick." The disparities uncovered were due to social determinant factors such as low income, and a lack of education and social support in the community.

There was a clear indication that health information and other pandemic prevention resources were not getting to the community. Now that we have passed the one-year anniversary of the pandemic, more strategic health education and resource-driven efforts must be tailored to specific communities to enhance preparedness.

Note: Dr. Gunness formerly served as Senior Officer with the US Public Health Service at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where he conducted disease surveillance and epidemiological investigations on highly infectious communicable diseases, such as MERS-Covi, MDR-TB, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Share Your St. John's Memories with University Archives

By Alyse Hennig, Assistant Archivist, University Libraries



You have all witnessed many important moments of St. John's University's 150-year legacy. Some of you may have even seen several decades!

When you arrived at work each day at our beautiful campuses, you contributed to making St. John's a welcoming place for our students. You attended Mass in St. Thomas More Church, or perhaps the Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes; enjoyed campus events such as the Winter Carnival and the Grand Alumni Homecoming Weekend; cheered on our sports teams in Carnesecce Arena (maybe you remember it as Alumni Hall); observed the construction of new buildings such as the

D'Angelo Center in 2009, Sullivan Hall in 1989, or even the University Center in 1972; and probably read *The Torch*, *The Forum*, or *St. John's Today*, to catch up on the latest campus news.

If you captured photographs, saved old University publications or memorabilia, or simply have some wonderful memories in mind, the University Archives encourages you to share your stories and artifacts to help us document St. John's history. Follow us at @SJUarchives on Twitter and Instagram as we share highlights from the collections in the University Archives during this 150th anniversary celebration, including newly digitized photographs, documents, artifacts, and historical video footage.

I look forward to hearing from you as together we celebrate this important milestone in the University's exceptional history. If you have any questions, please contact me at henniga@stjohns.edu or 718-990-6682.

150TH ANNIVERSARY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

This year, St. John's University is celebrating its 150th anniversary! To acknowledge this milestone, please consider supporting St. John's **150th Anniversary Scholarship Fund** today.

Your gift to the scholarship fund ensures that the University can continue to provide the same opportunities to students, regardless of financial need.

For a limited time, donors of \$10 or more to the 150th Scholarship Fund will receive a special edition St. John's face mask.



Nicole Ziegler '20TCB, M.B.A. Candidate, Class of 2021

"THEN" AND "NOW"

