



SIUE School of Nursing hosts biennial Alumni and Friends Celebration under the stars

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ST. LOUIS - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing (SON) hosted its second Biennial Alumni and Friends Celebration, “Honoring the Past – Empowering the Future Through Global Outreach,” on Saturday, Oct. 27, in the James S. McDonnell (JSM) Planetarium in St. Louis’s Forest Park.

Approximately 200 alumni, faculty, clinical partners and friends gathered to celebrate the SON’s past, present and future excellence in nursing education through global outreach. The all-alumni reunion also celebrated the 10-year anniversaries of the SON classes of ’68, ’78, ’88, ’98 and ’08.

“Each of you, our partners, generous donors, and alumni, faculty and staff, values the School of Nursing and recognizes not only what the School means to you, but also to the field of healthcare,” said SON Dean Laura Bernaix, PhD, RN. “You are invested in the success of our School in perpetuity, and we are grateful.”

“We love hearing how the education you obtained impacted your career trajectory,” she continued, “how you are proud to hire fellow SIUE SON graduates because of the exceptional preparation they’ve received, and how you see your investments paying dividends in meeting the needs of students, and therefore, the region and beyond.”

The SON’s Valerie Griffin, DNP, assistant clinical professor and global experiences coordinator, introduced the featured program which showcased global outreach initiatives and impact. Recent graduates Lorilee Sebesta, Greg Jennings and Terry Wooten shared their transformative student experiences in Haiti, Guatemala and Costa Rica.

“These speakers represent our strong future, not only in terms of the next generation of nurses, but also with regard to healthcare, which is multidisciplinary, collaborative and global,” Bernaix said. “Their stories are incredibly inspiring.”

“This year’s gala was a spectacular event,” added SON Senior Director of Development Patti McDonald. “Clinical partners and friends of the SIUE School of Nursing generously sponsored and underwrote our evening under the night sky. Guests enjoyed virtual reality and flight simulation rides during the reception. The event finale was a JSM Planetarium Night Sky Show that educated our guests in a fun and inspiring way.”

The event’s top sponsors included Galaxy-level supporters Anderson Hospital; G & G Anesthesia, LLC; Star-level supporter Memorial Health System; and Comet-level supporters ATI Nursing; Dr. Laura Bernaix; BJC Healthcare; Dr. Pai; Carle Foundation Hospital; SSM Health DePaul – St. Louis; Evolutionary Anesthesia; HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital; Dr. Mary Ann and James Boyd; Laerdal Medical Corporation; Memorial Hospital BJC HealthCare; Gloria and Al Perry; and SSM Health.

The [SIUE School of Nursing’s](#) programs are committed to creating excellence in nursing leadership through innovative teaching, evidence-based practice, quality research, patient advocacy and community service. Enrolling nearly 1,400 students in its baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral programs, the School develops leaders in pursuit of shaping the nursing profession and impacting the health care environment. SIUE’s undergraduate nursing programs on the Edwardsville campus and the regional campus in Carbondale help to solve the region’s shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance the quality of nursing practice within all patient service venues. The School’s graduate programs prepare nurses for advanced roles in clinical practice, administration and education.