

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP LUNCHEON 2025

March 3, 2025

River City Casino & Hotel Event Center

Saint Louis, Missouri



TRANSFORMING
THE FUTURE OF
ALZHEIMER'S
AND OTHER
RELATED DEMENTIAS



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province



“Love is the bond that unites us with one another and with God.”

*~Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger
Letter #949, December 8, 1850*

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 Women’s Leadership Luncheon. I want to offer my heartfelt gratitude for your friendship and unwavering support for our sisters. Your ongoing prayers, generous contributions and the countless ways you assist our sister communities bring me immense joy. We are able to continue our mission because of you and the impact of your many contributions is felt by our sisters.

The Women’s Leadership Luncheon provides us with a chance to acknowledge the distinctive impact and contributions of women within our communities and the wider world. We are excited to have so many of you join us today.

As you embrace the fellowship and community of those around you, we encourage you to remember this year’s theme: The Nun Study: Transforming the Future of Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Related Dementias. Established in the 1980s and involving 678 sisters, the Nun Study continues to shape Alzheimer’s research and treatments. The participation and contributions of these sisters illustrates how SSND are lifelong educators in all we do. We also recognize today’s theme will resonate with many of you who know of someone or have a loved one courageously battling these terrible diseases and the effect it has on families and caretakers.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to our individual and corporate sponsors who made today’s complimentary event possible, while also addressing the pressing needs of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. I thank you for your ongoing commitment.

Yours in peace,

Sister Debra Sciano, SSND

Sister Debra Marie Sciano, SSND
Provincial Leader





Mary Claire Diel
Notre Dame High School Senior

Notre Dame High School is a sponsored ministry of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

Mary Claire Diel is a senior at Notre Dame High School. She plans on attending Maryville University for Speech and Language Pathology in the fall. Mary Claire embodies the charism of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and Notre Dame High School as a confident, compassionate Christian in all aspects of her life. She is generous in spirit and gives her time freely with an open heart. At school, she is an active member of many organizations, including the National Honor Society, where she serves as the Vice President and an Academic Coach. Most notably, though, she spends a great deal of time out in the community, living her faith and assisting others in need. She has dedicated her time to a wide variety of causes, including volunteering at a local food pantry, offering speech language assistance, and developing the faith of others through various parish programs. In her spare time, Mary Claire likes to play tennis, swim, sing, and write.



**Join Us May 8, 2025,
and support
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School Sisters of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province



Program

Welcome **Sister Helen Jane Jaeb, SSND**
Provincial Councillor

Prayer **Mary Claire Diel**
Notre Dame High School Senior

Introduction of Video **Sister Charlene Zeisset, SSND**

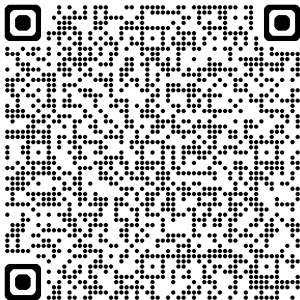
*SSND Alzheimer's
Walk Video*

Introduction of Speaker **Sister Charlene Zeisset, SSND**

Keynote Speaker **Dr. Margaret Flanagan, M.D.**
Associate Professor of Pathology and
Laboratory Medicine at the University of
Texas Health Science Center San Antonio

Q&A

Closing Remarks **Debbie Rohrich-Tyler, NDHS '87**
Manager of Donor Relations and Events



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Speaker



Dr. Margaret (Maggie) Flanagan

Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio

Dr. Margaret (Maggie) Flanagan is an Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and holds the inaugural Endowed Baptist Health Foundation of San Antonio's Distinguished Chair in Alzheimer and Neurodegenerative Diseases. As a physician-scientist and board-certified neuropathologist, she is committed to deciphering the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying dementia to enhance diagnostic and therapeutic approaches for these complex disorders.

Dr. Flanagan's passion for medical science is deeply influenced by her family background. Born in the United States to an Irish father who gained American citizenship through his service in the U.S. Army, her family moved back to Ireland shortly after her birth. They planned to settle there long-term. However, due to increasing political unrest known as "the Troubles" in the late 1980s, they returned to the U.S. just before Dr. Flanagan started kindergarten. This early experience of mobility and exposure to different cultures would later influence her approach to global health challenges. Her mother, a registered nurse for 46 years before the onset of a devastating rapidly progressive dementia, was a graduate of the Academy of Our Lady in Mount Greenwood, a high school run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). This connection to a community dedicated to education and service profoundly shaped Dr. Flanagan's career path, instilling in her a commitment to compassion and excellence in healthcare. The loss of her mother to dementia in July 2023 after a seven-year battle with the disease marked a deeply personal tragedy for Dr. Flanagan. During her mother's illness,

continued on next page



Dr. Flanagan served as her primary caregiver and held power of attorney, confronting firsthand the challenges that families face when dealing with neurodegenerative diseases. This personal experience has further fueled her dedication to her research and her determination to find better treatments for Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias.

Dr. Flanagan's commitment to neuropathology began during her undergraduate years at the University of North Dakota, where she was introduced to microscopy and histopathology in the cytotechnology training program. Her passion for clinical research was further ignited at PRACS Institute, engaging in drug interaction and bioequivalence studies. These early experiences solidified her resolve to pursue a career in medical research. Opting to study overseas, Dr. Flanagan attended Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, benefiting from her dual Irish and American citizenship. Her medical school research project focused on the B-Raf proto-oncogene mutation in papillary thyroid carcinoma. During her first clinical rotation in geriatric medicine, she interacted with dementia patients and their families, which heightened her awareness of the disease's complexities. This became deeply personal when her father was diagnosed with dementia, an event that occurred shortly before his passing in 2012 during her medical school years. Additionally, the loss of her mother to dementia in July 2023, has only deepened Dr. Flanagan's dedication to her research and her commitment to discovering more effective treatments for Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias.

Upon returning to the United States, Dr. Flanagan completed an Anatomic Pathology residency at the University of Washington. There, she developed a cost-effective brain autopsy protocol that adhered to the National Institute on Aging and Alzheimer's Association guidelines, reducing costs by over 70% while preserving diagnostic breadth of the original guidelines. She then advanced to a Neuropathology fellowship at Stanford University, where she refined Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease panels for the Multiplexed ion beam imaging quantitative platform, enhancing the study of brain pathologies. Her tenure at Stanford was supported by a National Institutes of Health career development supplement through the university's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. As the Acting Neuropathology Core Leader at Stanford's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center under



her mentor Dr. Thomas Montine's supervision, Dr. Flanagan spearheaded the development of a novel brain banking protocol and collaborated with other prominent Neuropathology cores at institutions such as Rush University, University of California San Francisco, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Currently, Dr. Flanagan directs a leading-edge research laboratory at the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio. Her team employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating quantitative molecular platforms, biomarker development, and the synthesis of biostatistics with epidemiological assessments. She also serves as Neuropathology Core Leader for the federally funded South Texas Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, directs the Bigg's Institute Brain Bank, serves as the Lead Neuropathologist for the Honolulu Asia Aging Study, and oversees the iconic Nun Study on Aging and Alzheimer's Disease. In her role with the Nun Study, Dr. Flanagan meticulously correlates brain autopsy findings with cognitive and physical assessments from the participants' lifetimes, aiming to elucidate the progression of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Her contributions have led to numerous significant publications that offer new insights into the interplay between brain pathologies, lifestyle factors, and genetics in the development of neurodegenerative diseases.

Dr. Flanagan is at the forefront of digital pathology in dementia and aging focused research. She plays a crucial role in a groundbreaking initiative aimed at connecting multiple Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers to enhance and standardize advanced analytics for whole slide images. She is working with collaborators to generate a federated platform to facilitate efficient and streamlined data sharing and analyses of human digital neuropathological slides created from brain autopsy samples. This involves the development of an open-source platform that aggregates data from multiple repositories into a central registry portal, employing the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) principles. She is also developing and validating artificial intelligence pathology tools. This work optimizes these tools, specifically their diagnostic and research capabilities. Through Dr. Flanagan's leadership in these cutting-edge efforts, she is helping to shape the future of neuropathological research by leveraging digital technology to improve the accuracy and efficiency of diagnoses and enhance the understanding of neurodegenerative diseases.

continued on next page



Through her extensive research, teaching, and leadership roles, Dr. Flanagan continues to significantly advance our understanding of Alzheimer's and related neurodegenerative diseases, informing the development of future interventions and enhancing patient care. This journey, enriched by her mother's legacy and her own diverse experiences, exemplifies her commitment to making a meaningful impact in the field of neuropathology.



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Women Honorees



*Sister Janice
Fennewald, SSND*

Transportation
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Central Pacific Province

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On behalf of Jim Butler Auto Group, we are pleased to honor Sister Janice Fennewald. To know Sister Janice is to know love, peace and God's grace. Her commitment to Christ and his children along with her undeniable sacrifices are to say the least, exemplary. She brings laughter and joy to all around her. With all our love, we thank you, Sister Janice. You are a beautiful light in our lives.



Claire Rudelic

Vice President Senior
Portfolio Manager

Midwest BankCentre



We would like to nominate Claire Rudelic for the SSND Women's Leadership Award. Claire goes above and beyond to create an exceptional experience for our clients, ensuring their expectations aren't just met — they're exceeded. Her servant leadership lifts those around her, strengthening both team morale and performance. Thanks to her dedication and expertise, a key client relationship has doubled, and she has consistently surpassed goals every year at the Bank. Claire is not only a trusted partner to our clients but also a valued colleague and positive force in our community.



Women Honorees



Kadi Montez
Vice President of
Business Transformation
Mercy



Kadi Montez is passionate about women in STEM with a wealth of diverse experiences and leadership in that field. Kadi started her career in health care as a physical therapist before shifting to clinical informatics, and then to health care strategy and hospital administration where she led teams in aggressive growth and advancement of critical services to the community. She currently serves as vice president of business transformation for Mercy's technology division where she is focused on maximizing the benefit of technology solutions in clinical and administrative settings. Kadi earned a master's in health administration and health informatics and defended her doctoral thesis in higher education administration on the integration of informatics into clinical degree programs. She has influenced the next generation of caregivers by serving as a clinical instructor in health informatics and clinical decision support at local universities. Kadi is a well-rounded, respected, thoughtful and accomplished leader who emphasizes practical and quality focused approaches while leading with integrity, heart and humor.



Women Honorees



Jamie Pollard
School Counselor
Notre Dame High School



Jamie Pollard is a school counselor at Notre Dame High School. She has served 28 years in public, private, and residential schools in suburban, rural, and international environments, working with Pre K-College students in traditional, special, and alternative education. She has been at Notre Dame High School since 2017 and has been an integral member of the faculty. Jamie works to ensure that the students at Notre Dame High School are supported socially and emotionally while also being an invaluable resource for the college admissions process and college scholarship process. Jamie is dedicated to her students and her school. She spends countless hours working behind the scenes to ensure that her students are given the best opportunities and have the support they need to succeed in high school and life thereafter. Her commitment to her faith is inspiring to her students and her colleagues. Notre Dame High School is proud to recognize Mrs. Jamie Pollard for being a woman of professional grace and dedication. Jamie truly embodies the mission of Notre Dame High School of being a confident, compassionate Christian woman leader, and we are thrilled to recognize the contributions she has made to the school. Congratulations, Jamie!



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Sister Honorees



Sister Rose Ann Bacak †

Honored by Jack and Georgie Gibbs

The Bacak family was a prominent family in St. Elizabeth's Parish in Alice, Texas, in the 1950's. I went to school with the Bacak children at St. Elizabeth's Catholic School, staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame at that time. Rose Ann was two years ahead of me in school, and her brothers, James and Hank, were before and after me. I remember Rose Ann was an excellent student, a very pretty girl, and active in church. Her sister, Barbara, was several years younger and the baby of the family, and also a very pretty girl, and favorite with the sisters.



Sister Gail Buckman

Honored by St. Gabriel ~ Women at the Well

On the 90th Anniversary of St. Gabriel the Archangel School, we want to honor Sister Gail Buckman, who retired in 2024 after having served as band director for 27 years. Sister Gail, always smiling, could be found not only in the band room, but also on the playground and as a crossing guard greeting the students. Sister Gail was the last of the 147 SSND educators who taught at St. Gabriel over 9 decades. St. Gabriel owes a debt of gratitude to the School Sisters of Notre Dame who devoted their lives to helping generations of students reach their potential, both academically and by guiding their faith lives.

Blessings on all Women at all Stages
of Life who Serve as Peacemakers!



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Sister Honorees



Sister Carol Jean Dust

Honored by Patti Brock and Rae Ann Keilty

“In all may God be our goal and end, our highest good, in Whom we find all that makes us content and truly happy”. Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger. For 60 plus years Sister Carol Jean Dust, SSND (Dusty), has been one of our closest friends and we have witnessed her live this quote lovingly, faithfully and consistently. This has been true whether her ministry called her to be an elementary or secondary teacher, a Missionary to Honduras, or a coordinator of religious education. In addition to serving as General Council member or serving the Central Pacific Province as Chairperson of the SSND Ministry Commission or serving on the Vocations Team for North America... God, and God alone has been Dusty’s goal. Dusty has touched many lives, from near and far! How blessed we are to know her as a sister in community, as a family member, as a friend, or as a former student. She challenges us to be faith-filled, hope-filled and love-filled PEOPLE. Thank you, Dear Dusty!



Sister Ruth Emke

Honored by Mary Emke

Ruth knew her calling at a very young age. (I have to admit to the joy of having my own room when she joined the sisters at the age of 14.) Her service to God and others has taken her to many places around the globe. She taught young minds from Los Angeles to Sierra Leone, West Africa. Her passion, though, is ministry which she has managed to do, in small ways and large, wherever she’s been. Through it all, she has remained grounded in faith and family. As her then very young niece, upon hearing her called “Sister Ruth”, chimed, “She’s just Ruthie!” So proud to be her sister.



Sister Honorees



Sister Alene Faul †

Honored by The Pawlowicz Sisters: Stephanie Vergara, Madonna Emht and GERALYN Gossett

Some memories of the loveable, unforgettable S. Alene Faul, SSND ~ Her sense of joy peppered with an adorable dash of impishness.

Her unself-conscious great big belly-shaking laugh. Her persistent yet gentle push for students to have the courage to think and act outside the box.

Her uncanny sense of our innate abilities & encouragement to try new things (think debate team). Her boundless love of theater & drama; noteworthy was her ability to include a student's personal talent into a production (think roller skaters, baton twirlers). Her love of language and her continual desire to learn, e.g. off she went to get her doctorate, coif & wimple blowing in the wind no doubt. Her community outreach - not only was she involved with adult learning, but courageously introducing new topics, e.g. the Silva Mind Control Method at Blow School! What a gal!



Sister Patricia Gravemann

Honored by Joan C. Harris

In honor of my dear cousin who generates happiness in the spiritual experience of living every day with love, grace, and gratitude. She is very inspiring to all around her!

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Sister Honorees



Sister Jo Donna Grimes †

Peter M. Rohrich III, PMR Law

The flame may go out, but the light stays bright forever.

On December 29, 2007, Sister Jo Donna Grimes answered our Lord's call, and I am humbled to have the opportunity to honor her life and legacy. No matter what age we are, we all have

memories of a favorite teacher or school administrator who impacted our lives in a positive way. Sister Jo Donna was that for me. While attending St. Martin of Tours grade school, I had the opportunity to learn many life lessons from Sister Jo Donna, who was the acting principal. I am fully aware that some of these life lessons came as I treaded hot water and while I am certain I tested her patience at times. Sister Jo Donna was always willing to give me and other students a second chance, and as I recall, sometimes a third, fourth or fifth chance. While demonstrating keen leadership skills, her compassion for inspiring others, especially the children she taught, created an environment for kids to grow, learn and flourish under her leadership. Today, I am proud to say that Sister Jo Donna made me a better person and left the world a treasured place for students like me and the countless lives she touched.



Sister Kathryn Hoener †

Honored by Dr. Margaret Sullivan, PhD

Someone we'll always treasure in our hearts.



Sister Honorees



Sister Clarea Hotze †

Honored by Jack and Georgie Gibbs

Sister Clarea taught 7th and 8th grade at St. Elizabeth's Catholic School in Alice, Texas, in the last 1950's. I attended her classes in 1953-54 and 1954-55. She was a very inspirational teacher and expected the best from her students. She was a joyful and cheerful person, but a strict disciplinarian. She gave me the love of learning and the mastery of good study habits that carried me easily through public high school, college and later in life. Aside from my parents, Sister Clarea was the first major influence on my life.



Sister Rosemary Hufker †

Honored by Gerry Hufker

In memory of my big sister who meant so much to the family and to the SSND. We are grateful for all the work that she has done.

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Sister Honorees



Sister Linda Jansen

Honored by Carol Jean Tilley

The lady I chose to honor today is not affected by riches... she has never desired to pile up treasures on earth ... 'cause she knows that sparkling diamonds and colored stones do not last, but laying up treasure in Heaven will satisfy a person for all eternity. Sister Linda Jansen came to Notre Dame College as a Postulant in 1959. There she studied business courses and became known for her keen sense of organization and teamwork. The years flew by and in 1963, Sister Linda was missioned to her first assignment. When stationed to Ripa some years later, she learned of the broader challenges that go with the daily demands of Sisters throughout the Community. She became a much-desired community member and she was often called upon to organize activities, prepare newsletter contributions, and assist with preparing budgets and projections for the future. While at Ripa during her current assignment, Linda kept in close touch with the Novitiate/Profession "Class of '63." This meant that Linda sent out a regular newsletter, carrying news of Jubilees, awards and recognitions, requests for prayers, and notices of a classmate's passing. She did this all with love and compassion. We deeply appreciate Linda's quiet and loving style and look forward to her ongoing communications with us.



Sister Philip Marie Link †

Honored by The Honorable Andrew J. Gleeson

The years have steadily and methodically moved on. Holy Angels Parish, East St. Louis, IL, is a distant and yet poignant memory, of which the School Sisters of Notre Dame are an integral part. They were the "presence" in our school life and parish activities, and none more prominent than Sister Philip Marie Link. Sister Philip Marie was the principal for the majority of my time there as a student. The school had an enrollment of 550-600 students, sixteen teachers (of which approximately half were SSND) and staff all supervised by Sister Philip Marie. And the school ran like clockwork! As I reflect on Sister Philip Marie's presence at Holy Angels, I recognize and appreciate that she was an exceptional administrator whose mission was to create the absolute best Catholic learning environment possible. Thank you, Sister Philip Marie Link for a job well done!



Sister Honorees



Sister Dolores Shea †

Honored by Jean Buchana, SSND Associate

Sister Dolores was my mentor in guiding me as I studied to be a School Sisters of Notre Dame associate. She was always gentle and kind. We remained friends while she lived at Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, and at The Sarah Community, Bridgeton,

Missouri. I miss her.



Sister Karl Mary Winkelmann

Honored by Marty Hoormann Campbell, Rosary High School, Class of 1970

Many times, in my life, I have found myself saying that I was raised by the SSNDs. I had the privilege of having them as my teachers in both grade school and high school. Although

many of the sisters influenced various facets of who I became, only one in particular do I consider to be a pillar of my life. Sister Karl Mary Winkelmann, SSND, significantly contributed to my foundation of beliefs and played a major role in my life choices. At Rosary High School, Sister Karl Mary was not only my freshman homeroom teacher, but my Latin teacher as well. I was blessed again in my junior year to have her as my Theology teacher, maybe called Religion in high school. In senior year she was assigned as my guidance counselor. She utilized each of these opportunities to teach all of us, by word and example, how to live by our faith as kind, caring, and thoughtful individuals. Because of her gift of listening and insight, she helped guide me to a very fulfilling career as a physical therapist which I knew nothing about before her advice and encouragement. I believe that it is because of Sister Karl Mary that I was so happy in my chosen career. I would not be the person I am without the great influence and example of Gospel living that I have received from her. Thank you, Sister Karl Mary, not only for your life-long friendship, but especially for teaching me faith in action. I will be forever grateful.





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- 2022 ***Aamina B. Akhtar, M.D*** ***Marsha Benney, CPA***
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- 2020 ***Ann Cuiette Marr***
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- 2019 ***Kimberly A. Ritter***
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- 2018 ***Susan Block***
Family Lawyer, retired Circuit Judge,
Founder of Caring for Kids, Inc.
- 2017 ***Donna Heckler***
Director of Communications, Society of the Sacred Heart
- 2016 ***The Honorable Anne-Marie Clarke***
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Alumna of Rosati-Kain High School-St. Louis, 1967
- 2015 ***Patricia Martens Balke, Ph.D.***
Educator, Author, Psychotherapist, Volunteer, NDHS '61
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Angie Schmid, Independent Consultant, Jordan Essentials

Dr. Ruth Wagner, Bayer

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Thank you for attending our 2025 Women's Leadership Luncheon. All proceeds benefit the ministries of the sisters who devote their lives to creating positive, systemic change throughout the world.

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