



Nassau-Suffolk
Hospital Council

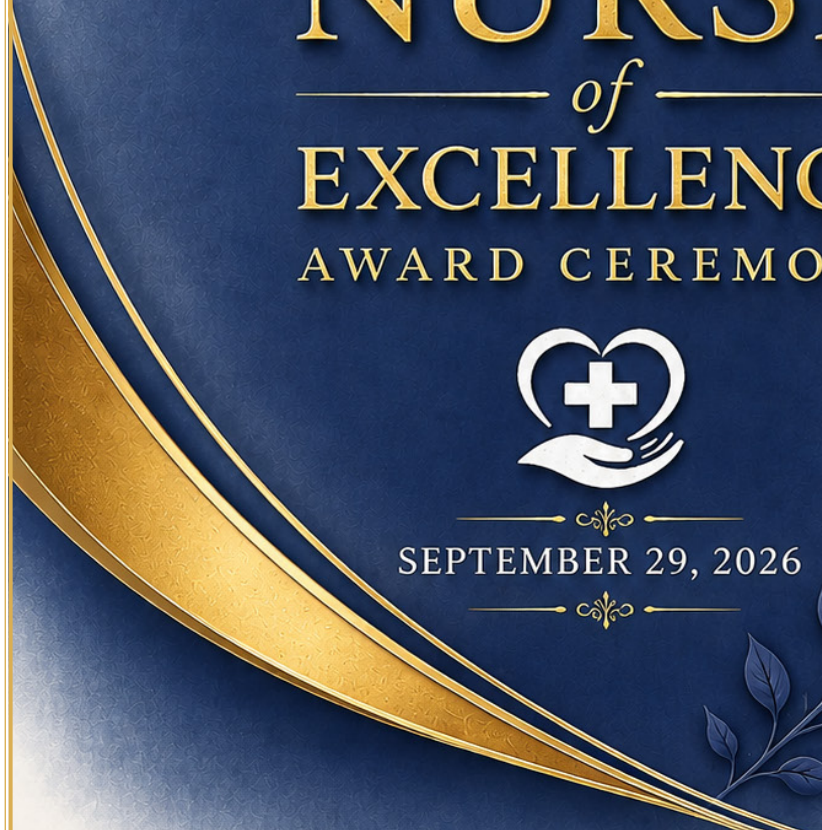


30TH

— ANNUAL —
NURSE
— of —
EXCELLENCE
AWARD CEREMONY



— —
SEPTEMBER 29, 2026
— —



The Legend of the Teapot

The teapot tradition began in the 1980s with the New York State Legislature's Nurse of Distinction Program. The first recipient of the Long Island Nurse of Distinction nomination spoke of the challenges that nurses and other healthcare professionals face, and will face, in the decades to come.

In keeping with the message that day, it was recollected her comments included, "most of us nurses are like teabags, we don't know our own strength until we get into hot water." The allegory resonated among those involved in the program and it eventually became a custom for a prior recipient of the Nurse of Excellence award to bestow a teapot upon the current honoree.

The teapots remind our honored colleagues of their achievement and of their strengths. Like each of us, the teapots are seldom exactly alike. They celebrate the unique value that each Nurse of Excellence brings to those they serve.

The teapot symbolizes and reminds us that "hot water" often brings out the best in us and in our profession.



A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

SEPTEMBER 2026



This year, for the 30th time, the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council will honor the best of our region's bedside nurses, nurse leaders and the educators who fostered their desire to practice this distinguished profession. It's our great privilege to recognize 23 exceptional candidates who are advancing the profession of nursing in their own unique ways.

Each of these nominees has taken a different path to the podium, but every one of their journeys is inspiring. Some of the nominees were selected by their peers, others by their leadership. Some have been practicing or teaching for decades, others are just starting out in their careers. Their work is as wide-ranging as the profession of nursing itself – providing care in small community hospitals and major academic medical centers, at the bedside and in the community, engaging the next generation of nurses through leadership on the units and in the classroom, being present for patients in their first breaths of life and their last, and for all of the challenging times in between.

Though their backgrounds and experiences vary widely, they share common traits: innovative spirits, determination, passion and grit. Each of their stories is special and deserves to be told. That's why we recognize not only the winners today, but every one of the nominees.

Thank you all for your commitment to excellence. On behalf of our board of directors, the Council staff and the leadership at each of Long Island's hospitals and schools of nursing, we salute you.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wendy Darwell".

WENDY D. DARWELL
President and Chief Executive Officer
Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council

*Celebrating
an
Outstanding Career
in Nursing*

NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL
2026 NURSING FELLOW



NICOLETTE FIORE-LOPEZ, PHD, RN, CENP, FAONL, FAAN
Chief Nursing Officer
Good Samaritan University Hospital St. Charles Campus

**The Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, its members,
and the Board of Directors recognize Nicolette Fiore-Lopez
as an outstanding leader in the nursing field.**

**We thank Nicolette for her years of dedicated service to patients,
colleagues, and the pursuit of nursing excellence.**

We bestow upon her the designation of Nursing Fellow.

NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL 2026 NURSE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

ORDER OF PROGRAM

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

WENDY D. DARWELL

President and Chief Executive Officer, Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council

GREETINGS FROM THE NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL

JOSEPH GRECO, M.D.

Chairman of the Board, Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council

Executive Vice President and Chief of Hospital Operations, NYU Langone Hospital – Long Island

INTRODUCTION OF NURSE EXECUTIVES COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ALL NURSE OF EXCELLENCE NOMINEES

THERESA DILLMAN, DNP, MSN, MHA, RN, NE-BC

Chairwoman, 2026 Nurse of Excellence Subcommittee

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer

Plainview Hospital and Syosset Hospital Northwell Health

REMARKS BY THE HONOREES

LISA MCCARTHY CLARK, DNP, CPNP-AC/PC

Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Stony Brook University Hospital

JENNIFER PSINAKIS, BSN, RN, HNB-BC, PCCN

Senior Nurse Clinician

NYU Langone Hospital – Long Island

ANN-MARGARET DUNN NAVARRA, PHD, CPNP-PC, FAAN

Associate Dean, Nursing Research and Innovation

Stony Brook University School of Nursing

PRESENTATION OF THE TEAPOT

CLOSING REMARKS

THERESA DILLMAN, DNP, MSN, MHA, RN, NE-BC

Chairwoman, 2026 Nurse of Excellence Subcommittee

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer

Plainview Hospital and Syosset Hospital Northwell Health

NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL 2026 AWARD
FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE IS PRESENTED TO

LISA MCCARTHY CLARK DNP,CPNP-AC/PC
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
Stony Brook University Hospital

- AND -

JENNIFER PSINAKIS, BSN, RN, HNB-BC, PCCN
Senior Nurse Clinician
NYU Langone Hospital – Long Island

- AND -

ANN-MARGARET DUNN NAVARRA, PHD, CPNP-PC, FAAN
Associate Dean, Nursing Research and Innovation
Stony Brook University School of Nursing

**For achieving significant accomplishments in an area of practice,
serving as a mentor and inspiration for staff, providing assistance to patients
and families, and fostering a positive image of nursing.**

NURSE OF EXCELLENCE SELECTION CRITERIA

Outstanding contributions to the nursing profession and to the field of healthcare must be demonstrated based on the following criteria:

- Significant achievement within a particular area of nursing, including clinical practice, education, research or administration.
- Demonstrated leadership that provides a role model to inspire other nurses to improve the quality of their performance and assists other nurses in their development.
- Participation in activities that foster a positive public image of nursing as a profession.
- Nature, variety and complexity of nominee's achievements.
- Going above and beyond normal daily responsibilities.
- Demonstrated effectiveness as a change agent.
- Outstanding accomplishment(s).

Note: All registered professional nurses employed at a Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council membership organization, or affiliated school of nursing, at any employment level or scope of responsibility, are eligible to be nominated for the award. Prior nominees are not eligible. Each hospital or nursing school member of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council's Nurse Executives Committee is eligible to nominate one individual for the award. Each nominating entity has an internal selection process to facilitate making an appropriate nomination.

2026

Nurse Executive

COMMITTEE

Alison Rowe, MS, RN, NEA-BC

Assistant Vice President of Nursing
Stony Brook University Hospital

**Annalisa Monahan, DNP, MHA, MSN,
RN-BC, NE-BC**

Chief Nursing Officer
Stony Brook University
Eastern LI Hospital

Anthony Esposito, DNP, MSN, RN

Chief Nursing Officer
St. Joseph Hospital

Arlene Ramirez, MSN, RN, CCRN

Senior Director of Patient Care
Long Island Jewish Valley Stream

**Athanasia Giannakas-Lafaro, DNP,
AGNP-C, OCN**

Assistant Teaching Professor
St. Joseph University
Nursing Department

Carolyn Santora, MS, RN NEA-BC, CPHQ

Chief Nursing Officer
and Chief Regulatory Officer
Stony Brook University Hospital

Christine Kippley, MBA, MS, RN, NEA-BC, CCM

Vice President Patient Care Services
and Chief Nursing Officer
Peconic Bay Medical Center
Northwell Health

**Christopher Ruppert, MBA, MS, RN,
NEA-BC, NHDP-BC**

Vice President Patient Care Services
and Chief Nursing Officer
Mercy Hospital

Cynthia Danner, DNP, RN, NE-BC

Senior Vice President
and Chief Nursing Officer
St. Francis Hospital & Heart Center

Dawn Keiley, MHA, BSN, RN, CHEP, CHSP

Chief Nursing Officer
Good Samaritan University Hospital
St. Charles Campus

Deborah Hunt, PhD, RN

Dean, College of Nursing
and Public Health
Adelphi University

Elizabeth McNulty, DNP, RN, NE-BC

Chief Nursing Officer
St. Catherine of Siena Hospital

Gara Edelstein, RN, MSN

Chief Nursing Officer
Catholic Health

Heidi Pierluissi, MSOL, BSN, NE-BC, TCRN

Senior Director of Nursing
NYU Langone Hospital - Long Island

Jeanne Brennan, MSN, RN-CNL, BC

Senior Director of Patient Care
Medical-Surgical Nursing
Infusion Center
Mather Hospital Northwell Health

Jordan Yakoby, EdD, DNP

Associate Dean of Nursing
and Public Health
Adelphi University

Julie Ann Martusciello

Senior Director, Patient Care
South Shore University Hospital
Northwell Health

Karen Fasano, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC

Chief Nursing Officer
Good Samaritan University Hospital

Kate B. O'Neill, MSN, RN

Vice President
and Chief Nursing Officer
LIJ Valley Stream Northwell Health

Kathryn Lang DNP, RN, NE-BC

Vice President Nursing
and Patient Care Services
NYU Langone Hospital – Suffolk

Kristine Groger

Director of Inpatient
and Emergency Services
St. Catherine of Siena Hospital

**Launette Woolforde, EdD, DNP, RN, NEA-BC,
NPD-BC, DSc hc, FAAN**

Chief Nursing Officer
Northwell Health

Lauren Stoerger, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CCRN-K

Vice President of Nursing
and Patient Care Services
NYU Langone Hospital – Long Island

**Marcia R. Gardner, PhD, RN, CPNP,
CPN, ANEF**

Dean, The Barbara H. Hagan School
of Nursing and Health Sciences
Molloy University

Margaret Pfeiffer, MSN, NE-BC, CCRN

Chief Nursing Officer, Vice President
of Patient Care Services
Mount Sinai South Nassau

Margaret Strohlein, DNP, ANP-BC, RN, CNEcl

Nursing Chairperson, Associate
Professor
LIU Post, School of Nursing

**Marie Mulligan, PhD, RN, CNOR,
NEA-BC, FAAN**

Vice President
and Chief Nursing Officer
Huntington Hospital Northwell Health

Marsha Deckman, MSN, RN

Director, Patient Care Services
Peconic Bay Medical Center
Northwell Health



Michele Persico, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, NPD-BC, CCRN-CSC

Senior Director
North Shore University Hospital Northwell Health

Patricia Bruckenthal, PhD, APRN-BC, FAAN

Dean and Professor
Stony Brook University School of Nursing

R. J. Civello MSN, RN, NE-BC

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
South Shore University Hospital Northwell Health

Robyn McKeefrey, MA, BSRN-C, CCE, CCM

Vice President of Quality, Risk, Patient Safety
Chief Nursing Officer, Vice President of Patient Care Services
Stony Brook Southampton Hospital

Tameka Wallace, MBA, MSN-RN, CCRN, CPAN

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
Glen Cove Hospital Northwell Health

Tara Laumenede, MSN, MHCDS, RN, NE-BC

Associate Executive Director Patient Care Services
and Chief Nursing Officer
North Shore University Hospital Northwell Health

Tara Levesque DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Director, Quality Management and Performance Improvement
Mather Hospital at Northwell Health

Tara Matz, RN, MSN, NEA-BC

Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Mather Hospital Northwell Health

Theresa Dillman, DNP, MSN, MHA, RN, NE-BC

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
Plainview Hospital and Syosset Hospital Northwell Health

Virginia Peterson-Graziose, DNP, RN, CNE

Professor of Nursing
Farmingdale State College

2026 NURSE OF EXCELLENCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Theresa Dillman, DNP, MSN, MHA, RN, NE-BC, Chair

Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
Plainview Hospital and Syosset Hospital Northwell Health

Carolyn Santora, MS, RN NEA-BC, CPHQ

Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Regulatory Officer
Stony Brook University Hospital

Denise Driscoll, RN-BC, CARN, PMHCNS-BC, NPP

2025 Nurse of Excellence Honoree
Mather Hospital Northwell Health

Gara Edelstein, RN, MSN

Chief Nursing Officer
Catholic Health

Giselle Gerardi, PhD, RN, RNC-OB,C-EFM

2025 Nurse of Excellence Honoree
Stony Brook University School of Nursing

Jordan Yakoby, EdD, DNP

Associate Dean of Nursing and Public Health
Adelphi University

Kathryn Lang DNP, RN, NE-BC

Vice President Nursing and Patient Care Services
NYU Langone Hospital – Suffolk

Lee C. Moldowsky MSN, RN, NEA-BC, RN-BC, CPHQ

2025 Nurse of Excellence Honoree
NYU Langone Hospital – Long Island

Margaret Pfeiffer, MSN, NE-BC, CCRN

Chief Nursing Officer
Mount Sinai South Nassau

*Congratulations
to our
2026 Nurse of Excellence
Honorees*

2026 Nurse of Excellence Honoree

LISA MCCARTHY CLARK, DNP, CPNP-AC/PC

Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Lisa McCarthy Clark has been a nurse practitioner in the newborn nursery here for over 30 years and has become an expert in this field. During that time, she has interacted with dozens of physicians and hundreds of nurses, medical students, and pediatric residents. Lisa has mentored each one, helping hone their physical exam skills and medical knowledge. She is always sought after – able to help mothers feed a difficult baby, diagnose rare syndromes, and quickly triage and stabilize ill infants as needed.

Lisa's true niche, however, is the development of the care pathway of newborns who have been exposed to intrauterine substances and develop Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). She has presented this topic over twenty times, both locally, nationally, and abroad. Her protocol has helped cut down on the need to medicate the infants and has hastened their discharge time so they can go home to their families sooner. The interventions focus on tailoring nursing care based on the infant's symptoms. In addition to caring so well for these babies, she also cares for the moms. She shows them compassion, teaches them how to care for their newborn, and provides them with support when needed. One of her missions is to advocate and bring awareness to the issues surrounding opiate use in Suffolk County. She provides workshops, presents to legislators, and works with outpatient obstetrician/gynecologists to ensure women and their infants receive the best care and are treated fairly. She has spent many days giving legislative testimony for the protection of funding for the continuation of Public Health Nurses in Suffolk County and testified on the increasing incidence in Suffolk County of opiate use by pregnant mothers and the consequential effects on their newborns. She collaborated with our OB/GYN department to create a MOMS program for this patient population that requires maintenance medications during their pregnancy to prevent relapses and promote recovery. These mothers undergoing treatment for opioid use disorder now have a designated program, providing the relief and

comfort of knowing they are being cared for by nurses and doctors with specific training and experience in this condition during the antepartum, postpartum and newborn period. She provides teaching to all the staff on providing care for these fragile newborns to assist their recovery from opiate withdrawal. She continually emphasizes that the mothers of babies need education, reassurance, and compassion in caring for their newborns, never contempt.

Lisa has a passion for teaching. She is an Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor. She was a lead instructor for the STABLE neonatal resuscitation program, both in the US and abroad in Ireland. Other global initiatives include developing and implementing the Sudan "Helping Babies Breathe" program. She has provided training to Obstetrical Providers in neonatal resuscitation aimed at aiding those newborns struggling immediately following birth, as well as traveling with important equipment to assist in the provision of care for these small, vulnerable patients. She obtained her nursing degree of practice in Ireland as well and became a council member of the Irish American Pediatric Society and remains active today. She established with her Irish Medical colleagues the Neonatal Resuscitation Program in University Hospital Cork, Ireland in 1994-1997.

2026 Nurse of Excellence Honoree

JENNIFER PSINAKIS, BSN, RN, HNB-BC, PCCN

Senior Nurse Clinician

NYU LANGONE HOSPITAL - LONG ISLAND

Jennifer Psinakis exemplifies the highest standards of professional nursing through exceptional clinical expertise, compassionate patient-centered care, visionary leadership, and an unwavering commitment to advancing the nursing profession. With nearly 15 years of experience on a surgical telemetry unit, she has made significant contributions to clinical practice, staff development, quality improvement, and organizational excellence.

As a highly skilled bedside nurse, Jennifer cares for a complex and diverse patient population including thoracic and cardiovascular surgery patients, as well as patients requiring advanced monitoring and specialized care. She is especially recognized for her expertise in caring for cardiac and open-heart surgery patients, guiding them and their families through vulnerable and often challenging recoveries with clinical excellence, compassion, and reassurance. Her impact is enduring; patients frequently remember her by name and recall the meaningful difference she made in their care.

Jennifer consistently goes above and beyond her daily responsibilities to improve both patient and staff well-being. She founded the Nurse and Patient Wellness Committee and led the creation of the Zen Den, a dedicated wellness space that has become a valued hospital-wide resource supporting resilience, stress reduction, and self-care. In recognition of her outstanding contributions, she received her organization's Nursing Excellence Award in 2024.

Beyond her clinical and leadership contributions, Jennifer has demonstrated a commitment to advancing nursing science and improving caregiver well-being through research and innovation. She participated in a cross-campus study focusing on the impact of Aromatherapy on the perception of happiness and job satisfaction in nurses, which demonstrated a positive correlation between aromatherapy use and nurses' perceptions of happiness and job satisfaction, while

identifying opportunities for future research and program development. As part of this work, she collaborated with the Nursing Wellness and Resilience Team to develop guidelines and a practical toolkit to support implementation across the organization. Her scholarship has also been showcased at her organization's Wellness Summit through poster presentations focusing on creating wellness space and combatting burn-out. Through these initiatives, she has helped translate research into actionable strategies that promote workforce resilience, support caregiver well-being, and strengthen the nursing profession.

Her achievements also reflect a strong commitment to lifelong learning, innovation, and professional engagement. She holds master's-level certification and board certification in holistic nursing, actively participates in research and evidence-based practice initiatives, and has contributed to a pilot exploring artificial intelligence to enhance nursing documentation while preserving quality care. She also serves as Co-Chair of her campus Collaborative Leadership Board, helping to drive nursing quality and practice, and is an active member of the Nursing Science Council. Her participation as a Magnet Ambassador and Magnet Escort, along with attendance at the AONL Professional Governance Conference in 2025 and the Magnet Conference in 2024, further demonstrates her dedication to professional excellence and the advancement of nursing.

Through her clinical skill, leadership, innovation, and commitment to mentoring others, Jennifer is a powerful change agent and an extraordinary representative of nursing excellence. She is exceptionally deserving of the 2026 Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council Nurse of Excellence Award.

2026 Nurse of Excellence Honoree

ANN-MARGARET DUNN NAVARRA, PHD, CPNP-PC, FAAN

Associate Dean, Nursing Research and Innovation

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING

Ann-Margaret is an exceptional nurse leader, practitioner, researcher, educator, mentor, and innovator whose career reflects sustained excellence in nursing practice, research, education, leadership, and service. Over the course of a distinguished career spanning several decades, she has consistently advanced health equity, improved outcomes for vulnerable populations, and mentored generations of nurse scientists and clinicians. Her work has had a significant impact on nursing practice, healthcare delivery, and evidence-based care for underserved communities, particularly adolescents and young adults living with HIV.

As Associate Dean for Nursing Research and Innovation, Ann-Margaret is a transformational leader and nationally recognized expert in pediatric HIV care, adherence science, and health technology interventions. Her research focuses on improving antiretroviral adherence and health outcomes among adolescents and young adults, particularly Black and Hispanic populations disproportionately affected by health disparities. Supported by more than \$4 million in National Institutes of Health funding, she has led innovative clinical trials utilizing mobile health technologies and peer-support interventions to strengthen treatment adherence, increase patient engagement, and improve long-term outcomes. These contributions have positioned her at the forefront of developing scalable, sustainable interventions that can be implemented across healthcare settings to reduce healthcare disparities and improve quality of care.

She consistently exceeds expectations through her extensive mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and dedication to advancing nursing scholarship. She has mentored doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows, undergraduate researchers, and junior faculty, many of whom have gone on to publish, present nationally, secure funding, and establish successful academic careers. Her mentorship is characterized by accessibility, encouragement, and a commitment to fostering

professional growth. As one former student reflected, “Dr. Ann-Margaret Dunn Navarra inspires confidence, nurtures scholarly development, and creates lasting professional relationships that will extend well beyond my graduation.” She serves as an inspiring role model whose passion for nursing science, intellectual curiosity, and unwavering support motivate her mentees to pursue excellence in their careers.

Ann-Margaret’s leadership within the Eastern Nursing Research Society demonstrates remarkable growth and a deep commitment to volunteerism and professional service. As the newly elected President, she has strengthened mentorship initiatives, expanded networking opportunities, and promoted the dissemination of research that informs practice and improves patient outcomes. Through her leadership, she has helped cultivate a collaborative professional community while advancing nursing science and research excellence.

With more than 60 scholarly publications and numerous national presentations, she has significantly contributed to shaping the national conversation on HIV prevention, treatment adherence, social determinants of health, and health equity. Her scholarship has earned national recognition, including selection as an inaugural innovator in the Nursing Science Incubator for Social Determinants of Health Solutions Fellowship at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

Ann-Margaret exemplifies the highest standards of ethics, professionalism, integrity, compassion, and altruism, serving as a role model for colleagues, students, and emerging nurse leaders. Her collaborative leadership fosters interdisciplinary partnerships that address healthcare challenges. Through her exemplary leadership, scholarship, mentorship, and advocacy, she consistently goes above and beyond expectations, making a lasting impact on patients, communities, and the nursing profession. She is exceptionally deserving of this award.

*About the 2026
Nurse of Excellence
Nominees*

ADELPHI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF NURSING & PUBLIC HEALTH

Irene Auteri, PhD, RN

Assistant Professor of Nursing, Director Accelerated BS in Nursing Program

It is a privilege to nominate Irene Auteri for the prestigious Nurse of Excellence Award. She embodies the very best of the nursing profession: clinical expertise, academic rigor, transformative leadership, and a deep, lifelong commitment to community advocacy. Currently serving as a nursing faculty member and director of accelerated nursing programs at a local university, Irene has fundamentally shaped the futures of countless nursing students while simultaneously delivering critical healthcare services to underserved populations both locally and abroad.

As a nursing faculty member and director of accelerated nursing programs, Irene sets the gold standard for academic and professional ethics. Doctoral research into patient safety culture highlights a deep ethical commitment to patient safety and systemic transparency. By serving as an ethical role model, she inspires faculty peers to maintain rigorous academic standards and teaches students that accountability and integrity are the truest foundations of nursing practice. Irene is also a nurse historian who enthusiastically shares the rich history of the nursing profession.

Her career is a testament to the pursuit of educational excellence and clinical mastery. Advanced academic preparation in nursing education and nursing research has provided the foundation for a distinguished career dedicated to improving healthcare outcomes and educating future nurses. Doctoral research focusing on critical patient safety factors, learning styles, and safety culture assessments among undergraduate and experienced nurses has contributed vital data to the ongoing effort to reduce administration errors and improve healthcare delivery environments. Clinical experience is deeply rooted in maternal-child health and nursing education, including numerous leadership positions before transitioning into academia to guide the next generation of frontline healthcare professionals.

Excellence in nursing education requires seamless collaboration across academic departments, clinical placement sites, and community organizations. Irene excels at breaking down silos and works closely with healthcare administrators to secure premier clinical experiences for students. Furthermore, the ability to foster a positive, collaborative environment among faculty peers has created a culture of mutual support, shared governance, and academic excellence.

She has made significant impacts on the nursing profession through leadership in accelerated nursing education programs. This role plays an invaluable part in addressing the nursing shortage by allowing career changers and high-achieving students to transition into the workforce

rapidly without sacrificing the humanistic, evidence-based care standards that are consistently championed.

Irene's influence stretches far beyond traditional lectures. Critical patient safety concepts and evidence-based frameworks are integrated into the curriculum, preparing students to handle complex, high-alert healthcare environments with confidence and clinical competence. Through dedication and leadership, the accelerated nursing program has expanded significantly while maintaining academic rigor and promoting student success. Program outcomes have demonstrated exceptional achievement, reflecting the nominee's commitment to excellence. She also established a peer mentorship program within the accelerated nursing track, which has proven highly successful in supporting student development and engagement.

Leadership style is defined by empowerment. In the role of director, she oversees complex accelerated programs, orchestrating a high-stress academic environment with grace and strategic vision. She actively inspires faculty members to elevate their performance by spearheading innovative teaching strategies and mentoring colleagues. This leadership ensures that accelerated nursing programs are not only rigorous but also serve as incubators for high-performing, emotionally intelligent nurses prepared to meet the challenges of today's healthcare landscape.

What truly sets Irene apart as an exemplary candidate for the Nurse Excellence Award is a profound commitment to health equity and humanitarianism. Clinical skills and service have extended beyond local communities through volunteer efforts in disaster relief following devastating natural disasters. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, she stepped forward as a volunteer to provide essential care and support to a strained healthcare system. Demonstrating a deep commitment to the local community, she also helps operate a monthly free health clinic serving agricultural workers, bridging critical gaps in care for an isolated and vulnerable population by providing health screenings, education, and primary care services directly to those in need.

Irene represents the complete pinnacle of nursing excellence. An educator who inspires, a researcher who advances patient safety, a leader who strengthens academic programs, and a humanitarian who consistently serves populations in need, the nominee has left a profound footprint on both the local community and the broader global community, making this individual exceptionally deserving of the Nurse Excellence Award.

GLEN COVE HOSPITAL

Francine Kelly, DNP, MS, RN, NE-BC

Senior Director, Quality and Performance Improvement/Regulatory Compliance

This nomination for Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council Nurse Excellence Award is submitted for an extraordinary, dedicated, and highly respected nurse leader, whose profound impact and instrumental contributions provide a strong foundation of this institution's unwavering commitment to patient safety and exceptional care. Francine Kelly's "patient first" philosophy, combined with an unyielding ethical approach, makes her a beacon of integrity within our organization. She consistently demonstrates exemplary professional conduct, setting a benchmark for excellence. Her impressive academic achievements, including being doctoral prepared and advanced certifications, are a powerful testament to a profound commitment to lifelong learning. Francine is consistently sought out as the definitive "source of truth" for critical quality and regulatory matters, reflecting both extensive expertise and an ongoing pursuit of excellence.

Her unwavering passion, commitment, and perseverance are pivotal to this institution consistently achieving top-tier recognition. She has played an integral and decisive role in our organization's outstanding accomplishments, including a successful Baldrige Accreditation, attaining the prestigious Magnet with Distinction status, and navigating numerous successful Joint Commission surveys for specialty accreditations. Additionally, Francine's team ensures this institution maintains the highest level of standards, as demonstrated through their contributions to our institution's five-star quality rating by CMS and Healthgrades Patient Safety Excellence Award. These monumental achievements are direct indicators of her clinical expertise and unparalleled ability to translate complex regulatory requirements into tangible, measurable improvements in patient safety and outcomes. This showcases the nature, variety, and complexity of their achievements, demonstrating effectiveness as a change agent. She doesn't just meet standards; she consistently elevates them, working tirelessly to ensure that our commitment to quality patient outcomes goes far above the recommendations set by leading healthcare bodies.

Beyond her individual contributions, Francine is an exceptional role model and a unifying force for collaboration across the institution. They consistently mentor team members across all departments, proactively fostering an environment where growth and learning thrive. Her approachability and willingness to generously share knowledge inspire other nurses, creating cohesive and high-performing teams dedicated to shared goals. By empowering others, She builds up team members within our organization, elevates nursing practice, and champions quality improvement for everyone encountered.

In summary, Francine is an extraordinary nurse leader who not only fulfills but consistently surpasses all criteria for the Nurse Excellence Award. Her unparalleled professionalism, exemplary collaboration, impactful role modeling, and demonstrated clinical expertise makes her an incredibly deserving candidate. She is an invaluable asset to this institution and a true testament to the pinnacle of nursing excellence.

GOOD SAMARITAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Laura Martin, MBA, BSN, RN, CPHQ

Quality Management Coordinator

An accomplished healthcare leader with nearly 30 years of progressive experience in nursing leadership, clinical education, and healthcare quality improvement, Laura Martin has built a distinguished career advancing patient safety, elevating clinical standards, and strengthening organizational performance across the continuum of care.

Beginning a healthcare career in the late 1990s within a large health system, she established a strong foundation in Emergency Department nursing and advanced through multiple leadership positions, including Nurse Educator, Assistant Nurse Manager, and Nurse Manager. Throughout these roles, she was recognized for promoting clinical excellence, supporting staff development, and enhancing patient-centered care in high-acuity environments.

Since the mid-2000s, she has served in Quality Management at a major university-affiliated hospital, leading critical patient safety and performance improvement initiatives. Laura's work has focused on driving measurable outcomes, strengthening regulatory readiness, and advancing organizational excellence through data-driven quality strategies.

A Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ), she also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Healthcare. She is a member of an international business honor society reflecting her strong commitment to academic achievement, professional excellence, and lifelong learning.

Her contributions have been recognized through numerous awards and honors for leadership, clinical practice, patient safety, and service excellence, reflecting a sustained commitment to quality care, organizational improvement, and compassionate leadership.

Widely respected for a collaborative leadership style and data-driven approach to quality improvement, Laura has successfully led interdisciplinary teams in implementing sustainable change. Dedicated to mentoring future healthcare leaders, they remain committed to fostering a culture of accountability, safety, innovation, and continuous improvement.

GOOD SAMARITAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, ST. CHARLES CAMPUS

Kristina A. Bronleben, RN, BSN

Lead Clinical Supervisor

Kristina Bronleben's journey at St. Charles Hospital from LPN to RN to ANCC, and now Nursing Supervisor, reflects not only her growth as a clinician, but her unwavering commitment to excellence in nursing. At every stage of her career, she has gone above and beyond to provide the highest standard of care while offering genuine compassion, kindness, and emotional support to her patients, their families, and her colleagues.

What truly sets Kristina apart is her leadership. She leads by example with a calm, steady presence, even in the most high-pressure situations. Whether responding to a code neuro, a rapid response, or managing the complex demands of hospital operations, she brings a sense of confidence and reassurance that puts her team at ease and reminds them they are supported.

Kristina is always accessible and approachable. Her friendly demeanor and open communication style foster collaboration across disciplines and create an environment where staff feel heard, respected, and empowered. She is deeply committed to both patient and staff safety, and her actions consistently reflect that priority.

Her dedication does not stop there. Kristina is known for her flexibility and selflessness, adjusting her schedule, stepping in during staffing shortages at any hour, and ensuring that patient care is never compromised. She also goes the extra mile to keep her colleagues informed and supported, reinforcing her role as not just a leader, but a true team player.

Simply put, nursing is not just what Kristina does, it is who she is. She embodies the compassion, strength, and integrity that define an exceptional nurse leader.

For her outstanding leadership, her dedication to excellence, and the meaningful impact she has on the St. Charles community, we are honored to nominate Kristina Bronleben the 2026 Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council Nurse of Excellence Award.

HUNTINGTON HOSPITAL

Lyndsay Ferrer, MSN, RN, OCN

Clinical Professional Development Educator

It is an honor to submit our nominee, Lyndsay Ferrer for her outstanding contributions to nursing education, leadership, and professional development that exemplify the very best of our profession and make her a truly deserving candidate for this prestigious recognition. Lyndsay has consistently demonstrated significant achievement in nursing education. Her steadfast commitment to developing knowledgeable, confident, and highly skilled nurses is evident in every interaction. She delivers high-quality, evidence-based education that not only strengthens clinical practice and enhances patient safety but also directly supports optimal patient outcomes. This dedication to advancing nursing knowledge and skills marks her as an outstanding educator within our organization.

A defining characteristic of Lyndsay's leadership is her unwavering presence and unparalleled support for our staff. She serves as an inspiring role model, always available to respond quickly and efficiently to the team's needs. Whether guiding a new nurse through a challenging situation, reinforcing critical clinical skills, or offering reassurance in high-pressure moments, her unending support fosters a culture of trust, confidence, and continuous learning. Lyndsay actively assists nurses at all career stages in their development, cultivating an environment that encourages professional growth, critical thinking, and collaboration. She consistently goes above and beyond her normal daily responsibilities, demonstrating the nature, variety, and complexity of her achievements.

As our unit develops its Age-Friendly initiatives, Lyndsay has proactively participated alongside staff to obtain her certification in Gerontology. This personal commitment demonstrates her effectiveness as a change agent, leading by example and driving the adoption of new, essential practices. Furthermore, through her ongoing engagement, staff development initiatives, and contributions that extend beyond our unit, she actively promotes a positive public image of nursing as a respected and vital profession. Lyndsay exemplifies excellence through her leadership, accessibility, and deep commitment to supporting others. Her profound impact is felt daily across our hospital, and I wholeheartedly recommend Lyndsay for this well-deserved recognition for her outstanding accomplishments.

LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY POST, SCHOOL OF NURSING

Joseph Stanco, DNP, FNP-BC, HT-ACN, CPI

Adjunct Assistant Professor

Since 2010, Joseph Stanco has demonstrated sustained excellence and impact across clinical practice, education, research, and leadership within a large, integrated health system. His work has been particularly transformative in the care of patients with bleeding disorders—an often underrecognized and underserved population.

Clinically, Joseph provides exceptional, compassionate care to both pediatric and adult patients, with a strong emphasis on continuity across the lifespan. They have played a pivotal role in empowering adolescents to successfully transition from pediatric to adult care by fostering self-advocacy, health literacy, and personal accountability. This approach has improved patient engagement and long-term outcomes in a population that is at high risk for gaps in care.

His leadership extends well beyond the bedside. He serves as a regional representative on a national nursing working group focused on bleeding disorders and holds a position on a research nursing board within their health system. In these roles, he contributes to advancing evidence-based practice, shaping clinical standards, and supporting the professional development of nurses. Notably, he founded and currently lead the first national nursing organization dedicated to hemostasis and thrombosis nursing, creating a vital platform for education, collaboration, and advocacy within the specialty. This initiative reflects both innovation and a commitment to elevating nursing's role in specialized care.

As an educator, Joseph is equally impactful. Serving as a professor in a nurse practitioner program, he teaches complex courses such as pathophysiology while making challenging content accessible and clinically relevant. His passion for research is evident in his role as a certified principal investigator, and he actively mentors students to think critically, engage with evidence, and contribute to scholarly work. In

addition, through teaching health policy and advocacy, Joseph inspires future nurses to engage in legislative processes, analyze healthcare policy, and advocate for systemic change.

The breadth and depth of Joseph's achievements reflect a unique combination of clinical expertise, visionary leadership, and dedication to advancing the profession. He consistently goes above and beyond his responsibilities, serving as a role model who inspires colleagues and students alike. His work not only improves patient care but also strengthens the nursing profession through education, advocacy, and innovation.

Joseph exemplifies the qualities of a Nurse of Excellence through his sustained contributions, leadership, and unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for patients and advancing nursing practice.

MATHER HOSPITAL

Nicole Amendola, MSN, RN, PCCN-K

Nurse Manager

It is my profound honor to nominate a truly exceptional Nurse Manager for the 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award. Nicole Amendola embodies the very essence of an extraordinary nurse, one who leads not merely with knowledge and skill, but with genuine heart, profound humanity, and an unwavering commitment to others. Recently recognized with a Brookhaven Women's Recognition Award, her impact extends far beyond measurable outcomes, deeply influencing the lives she touches daily. She meticulously cultivates an environment where staff feel genuinely seen, supported, and inspired to perform at their best, even amidst the most challenging circumstances.

During a period of profound loss within her team, she emerged as an unwavering and compassionate presence. She offered solace, appeared at all hours, and ensured no one felt isolated in their grief. When an employee tragically passed away, leaving two children, one of whom was weeks away from starting his freshman year of college, she understood the mother's dedication to their success. Driven by a desire to honor the mother's wishes and ensure the children were supported, she organized a highly successful fundraiser to provide essentials for both boys. As a mother of college-aged children herself, she understood the importance of equipping the college-bound student with essential items and recognized that he would miss the poignant experience of college shopping with his mother. With immense compassion, she personally accompanied him, utilizing the funds raised. On her own time, she ensured he felt supported and equipped with everything his mother had worked so diligently to provide. Demonstrating her extraordinary commitment, she established a memorial garden outside the unit to honor her beloved employee, providing a tranquil space for staff and family to gather, heal, and remember. Her instinct to help is immediate and authentic; when she identifies a need, she acts quietly, humbly, and without any expectation of recognition. Her actions serve as a powerful reminder that nursing is not merely a profession, but a profound calling rooted in compassion and service.

As a leader, Nicole inspires others simply through her consistent daily example. She mentors new nurses, cultivates confidence within her team, and models the integrity and empathy that others aspire to emulate. Through her significant contributions as a Clinical Instructor at a local college, she extends her positive influence beyond her immediate unit, actively shaping future nurses to uphold the same values of excellence and kindness. Her achievements are both wide-ranging and deeply meaningful, spanning from elevating team culture and enhancing patient experience to building a community grounded in unwavering support, mutual respect, and heartfelt compassion. Her leadership emanates from authentic care, inspiring others to follow through the compelling example she sets.

At her core, she reminds us that the most powerful aspect of nursing lies in human connection. Her exceptional ability to uplift others in their hardest moments, to lead with quiet strength, and to provide care that transcends traditional medicine, truly distinguishes her. She is an unequivocally deserving candidate for the Nassau Suffolk Hospital Council 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award.

MERCY HOSPITAL

Dinelle Ramrattan-Grant, FNP-BC, CRRN, RN

Director of Nursing

Dinelle Ramrattan-Grant exemplifies exceptional nursing leadership through her consistent commitment to excellence, collaboration, and professional growth. She leads with our hospital's I-CARE values at the forefront and creates an environment where nurses feel supported, empowered, and heard. Her leadership has had a direct and lasting impact on nursing practice, patient outcomes, and unit culture across the medical-surgical departments.

Dinelle is a strategic and innovative leader who effectively brings multidisciplinary teams together to solve complex challenges. Her work on initiatives such as hypoglycemia reduction on 4N, fall-prevention improvement on 3N, and enhanced discharge efficiency through the creation of a discharge lounge for 1N and 2N demonstrates her ability to translate vision into action. These efforts have improved patient safety, throughput, and the overall care experience, while also supporting staff workflow and morale.

Her contributions extend beyond unit operations. As Chair of the RN Council and the Staffing Committee, she ensures that frontline nurses have a meaningful voice in decision-making. She fosters an inclusive, transparent approach to leadership—listening carefully, addressing staffing concerns thoughtfully, and collaborating with nursing leadership to develop solutions that support safe, high-quality care.

Dinelle is deeply committed to mentorship and leadership development. She has played a pivotal role in supporting assistant nurse managers as they transition into leadership roles, designing and leading structured development sessions that clarify expectations, build confidence, and strengthen accountability.

Dinelle is a tireless advocate for her staff, her patients, and the profession of nursing. Her dedication, strategic vision, and unwavering commitment to excellence make her truly deserving of this award.

MOUNT SINAI SOUTH NASSAU HOSPITAL

Jacquelyn Rosen, MSN, RN, PMHCNS-BC, NC-BC

Psych/Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialist

It is my privilege to nominate Jacquelyn Rosen for this distinguished recognition. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing nursing practice through research, compassionate care, leadership, and mentorship. Her work has had a meaningful and lasting impact on patients, nurses, and healthcare organizations, making her highly deserving of this honor.

Her research has focused on issues that directly affect both patient outcomes and nurse well-being, including mindfulness practice, workplace violence prevention, restraint reduction, and alcohol withdrawal management. These projects have generated valuable insights that strengthen nursing practice and improve patient care. She has disseminated her work through presentations at regional and national conferences and through peer-reviewed publications that support best practices and advance nursing knowledge.

What distinguishes her work is her ability to translate research into meaningful practice change. Her efforts have contributed to increased reporting of workplace violence, reduced restraint use, and improved assessment and management of patients experiencing alcohol withdrawal. By focusing her research on topics that affect the safety, well-being, and professional development of nurses, she has helped foster a culture that values inquiry, learning, and continuous improvement.

Beyond her research contributions, she has served as a leader in developing educational programs, policies, and clinical guidelines that support safe, evidence-based care. She is widely recognized as an expert resource on crisis prevention, management of violent behavior, restraint reduction, suicide prevention, and alcohol withdrawal management. Through her participation on numerous organizational councils and committees, including nursing research, ethics, workplace violence prevention, nursing practice, education, safety, and advanced practice councils, she has helped shape initiatives that improve both patient outcomes and the professional practice environment. She also

serves as a liaison to system-wide nursing research and innovation efforts, ensuring that evidence-based practice remains a priority across the organization.

As a board-certified Psychiatric-Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialist, she has been a strong advocate for patients with behavioral health needs. Through education, policy development, and clinical leadership, she has helped create a more compassionate and supportive practice environment while promoting evidence-based care. Her work has improved both patient outcomes and staff confidence in caring for vulnerable populations.

Her leadership has been especially evident during times of crisis, including September 11th, Hurricane Sandy, and the COVID-19 pandemic. During these challenging periods, she provided guidance, support, and reassurance to colleagues and patients alike. Her steady presence and commitment to others helped staff navigate extraordinary circumstances while continuing to deliver high-quality care.

She is also deeply committed to mentoring others. She has guided graduate students, new nurses, nursing research fellows, and interdisciplinary colleagues, helping them develop research skills, implement evidence-based projects, and disseminate their findings. Through her mentorship, she has inspired future nurse leaders and researchers while fostering a culture of inquiry, collaboration, and professional growth.

Through her research, leadership, advocacy, and mentorship, she has strengthened nursing practice, improved patient care, and positively influenced countless colleagues. She exemplifies the values of innovation, compassion, excellence, and service, and I am honored to offer my strongest endorsement of her nomination.

NORTH SHORE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Michele Persico, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, NPD-BC, CCRN-CSC

Senior Director, Patient Care

With great pride we nominate Michele Persico our Senior Director of Patient Care Services, an exceptional nurse leader whose vision, integrity, and commitment to excellence have driven transformative change across the organization while strengthening the nursing profession.

In this role, she expanded her scope, influence, and operational expertise beyond traditional boundaries across clinical, educational, and operational domains. She demonstrates agility and strategic insight while building strong interdisciplinary relationships. Through implementation of structured frameworks and innovative initiatives, she has enhanced communication, accountability, and team performance.

She fosters a culture of empowerment, innovation, and continuous improvement. Her leadership during the Epic electronic-record transition exemplifies these strengths. A true subject matter expert from planning through execution. She devised innovative “Epic-rounding”, mobilizing education to over 1,500 frontline nurses directly on their units ensuring real-time support, adoption, and success.

A forward-thinking innovator, she championed technological solutions to enhance efficiency and professional development. She is spearheading exploration of an electronic platform to streamline and digitalize competencies, clinical ladder management, and workforce development initiatives across the system. She created the Leader Resource Teams channel, a centralized repository providing leaders with immediate access to essential tools and resources.

She led the transition of multiple departments from shared-drives to SharePoint, improving accessibility, efficiency, and sustainability. She supported digitization of new-hire orientation and streamlined operational and clinical resources into centralized electronic platforms modernizing infrastructure and reducing administrative burden. She partnered with fellowship and residency programs, incorporating flipped classroom models and innovative technologies.

Michele strengthens collaboration by fostering engagement and connection. Through recognition initiatives and enhanced communication tools, she promotes alignment and transparency. She facilitated the launch of organization-wide educational newsletters and introduced social-media platforms to highlight achievements, share knowledge, and support professional growth.

Under her leadership, staff engagement scores are exceptional: 97.6% combined score, 100% for one group, 95.8% for another. She has driven excellence in professional development, with 95% of staff BSN-prepared or higher, 100% of leaders BSN-prepared, 66% of frontline RNs certified (representing nearly 1,400 nurses), and 82% of leaders certified.

As a role model and mentor, Michele is committed to the growth of others. She supports leaders across the organization and health system, serving as a mentor and career advisor. Recognizing unique needs of frontline leadership, she implemented a monthly Assistant Nurse Manager learning series, engaging over 40 participants with outstanding feedback. She is instrumental in onboarding new leaders and advancing professional roles, including advocating for a nurse scientist position to support research and evidence-based practice.

She exemplifies lifelong learning, achieving NEA-BC certification and contributing to system-level leadership development programs. Her career reflects a commitment to innovation, education, and advancing nursing practice, evidenced by her numerous posters, presentations, publication, and ongoing research, and support of others for the same.

She consistently exceeds expectations, strengthening patient care delivery by ensuring teams are prepared, supported, and equipped for success, while extending her influence beyond her organization to positively impact the broader healthcare system. She is a visionary leader, inspiring mentor, and true change agent, highly deserving of this recognition.

NYU LANGONE HOSPITAL-SUFFOLK

Amy Bianco, RN

Registered Nurse - Operating Room

I am nominating Amy Bianco because she exemplifies excellence in nursing through her leadership, dedication to patient safety, and commitment to advancing quality care within her department. As a Registered Nurse, she consistently demonstrates professionalism, clinical expertise, and a strong commitment to improving both patient and staff experiences. She continuously seeks opportunities to enhance workflows, strengthen safety practices, and improve operational efficiency, making a meaningful impact on the department each day.

Amy serves as a role model for her colleagues through her positive attitude, collaborative approach, and willingness to support the growth and development of others. Recently stepping into the role of Charge Nurse, she has embraced additional leadership responsibilities with confidence and professionalism. In addition, she serves as a preceptor, helping to educate and mentor new staff while fostering a supportive learning environment that promotes clinical excellence and teamwork.

Her participation on the system-wide Skin Committee further highlights her commitment to quality improvement and evidence-based practice. Through this work, she has successfully introduced new products and practices to the operating room that enhance patient care and support the prevention of skin-related injuries, directly improving patient outcomes and safety. Her ability to identify opportunities for improvement and effectively implement change demonstrates her effectiveness as a change agent and her dedication to advancing perioperative nursing practice.

Beyond her daily responsibilities, she consistently goes above and beyond for both her patients and her colleagues. She is highly respected among the interdisciplinary team for her reliability, leadership, and commitment to excellence. Her contributions positively reflect the nursing profession as a whole and reinforce the critical role nurses play in driving innovation, patient safety, and compassionate care. Lastly, her achievements, leadership, and unwavering dedication make her exceptionally deserving of this recognition.

PECONIC BAY MEDICAL CENTER

Kathleen Wagner, DNP, MSN, NE-BC, CPN

Director of Professional Development and Magnet Program Director

It is with immense pride and unwavering enthusiasm that I nominate Kathleen Wagner for the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council Nurse of Excellence Award. Kathleen is not merely an exceptional nurse; she is a visionary leader, a transformative educator, and a deeply compassionate mentor whose profound impact resonates throughout Peconic Bay Medical Center and the broader nursing community. Her career, spanning diverse critical care roles to pioneering professional development initiatives, truly exemplifies the epitome of nursing excellence.

Kathleen's remarkable career began in pediatrics, where she honed her skills in critical care as an ICU nurse and transport nurse, demonstrating early on her capacity for high-stakes clinical expertise. Her dedication quickly propelled her into leadership roles, including Clinical Transformation Program Manager and Magnet Program Coordinator – experiences that laid a crucial foundation for her future work.

Eight years ago, Peconic Bay Medical Center was incredibly fortunate to welcome Kathleen, who arrived with a clear mission: to revolutionize our professional development department and shepherd our journey towards Magnet designation. Under her strategic guidance, she meticulously established and nurtured groundbreaking programs that have fundamentally transformed nursing practice at our institution. She spearheaded the development of our highly successful Nurse Residency Program, robust Fellowship Programs, and comprehensive Preceptor Programs, all designed to cultivate competence, confidence, and leadership from novice to expert. Her tireless efforts have not only elevated the standard of care but have also fostered a culture of continuous learning and growth.

Beyond direct program development, Kathleen has been instrumental in strengthening our shared governance model. She expertly oversees the Central Collaborative Care Council and was pivotal in standing up the various nursing councils at Peconic Bay Medical Center. These initiatives have empowered

nurses at all levels to have a direct voice in clinical decision-making and quality improvement, creating a more engaged and impactful nursing workforce.

Perhaps Kathleen's most profound and enduring legacy lies in her role as a mentor. She has served as a guiding light for countless nurses and leaders, tirelessly encouraging their professional advancement. She actively involves staff in Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) fellowships, research projects, and the entire Magnet process, instilling a passion for inquiry and innovation. Her unwavering belief in the potential of others has inspired many to pursue advanced certifications and return to school, thereby elevating the professional standards across our organization.

In a testament to her own commitment to lifelong learning, Kathleen recently completed her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), further solidifying her expertise and demonstrating her dedication to advancing nursing science and practice. This achievement, while personally significant, also serves as a powerful example to all who look up to her.

Finally, beyond her impressive professional accomplishments, Kathleen possesses an extraordinary human quality that makes her universally cherished. She is the person everyone turns to for advice, counsel, a shoulder to cry on, or a reason to laugh. Her deep empathy, wisdom, and unwavering support create an environment where nurses feel valued, heard, and supported, both professionally and personally.

Kathleen embodies the very essence of what the Nassau Suffolk Nurse of the Year Award represents. Her transformative leadership, educational innovation, profound mentorship, and unwavering dedication to the nursing profession have left an indelible mark on Peconic Bay Medical Center and on the lives of countless nurses. It would be a most fitting recognition to honor her with this esteemed award.

PLAINVIEW HOSPITAL

Lisa M. Felice, MSN, RN, CPNP

Director, Quality Management and Performance Improvement

It is with great pride that I nominate Lisa Felice for the Nassau Suffolk Nurse Excellence Award. In her role as nurse leader, she demonstrates exceptional nursing leadership through a consistent focus on patient safety, quality outcomes, and organizational performance.

Her commitment to healthcare began at the age of sixteen as a candy striper at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, an early foundation that shaped a career defined by purpose and impact. She went on to serve as a Clinical Nurse Specialist and Coordinator for a Pediatric Heart Center, where she managed the care of critically ill children from across the globe, including patients from Iraq, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Trinidad, Colombia, and Barbados. In this role, she navigated complex international care coordination, working across embassies, travel systems, and multidisciplinary teams to ensure seamless delivery of life-saving treatment. Her work contributed to saving over 100 lives: an extraordinary reflection of her clinical expertise and compassion.

Today, she continues to drive meaningful, system-level outcomes. Under her leadership, the hospital advanced from a Leapfrog “C” grade in 2023 to sustained “A” grades beginning in 2024, demonstrating a clear and measurable improvement in patient safety. She has also played a key role in the organization’s recognition as a national leader in inpatient diabetes care Leapfrog A, one of 3 hospitals in NYS with such recognition. She contributed to achieving Magnet recognition with distinction, including 17 exemplars. Her work ensures consistent delivery of high-quality, safe patient care across the organization.

What distinguishes Lisa is not only what she achieves, but how she leads. She brings clarity, humility, and focus to her work, partnering effectively across teams to align priorities and drive results. She is a trusted mentor and a steady, credible leader who holds herself and others accountable while creating space for collaboration and growth.

Her recognition includes completion of her organization’s leadership development program and being named one of the organization’s Top Leaders in 2026. However, her greatest impact is reflected in outcomes, stronger performance, safer care, and teams better equipped to deliver at a high level.

The recognition achieved during her tenure speaks to a broader story of sustained excellence. Stroke Gold Plus designations reflect reliable, evidence-based care for some of the most time-sensitive conditions. National recognition in inpatient diabetes highlights improved management of complex chronic diseases. Five consecutive Patient Safety Excellence Awards dating back to 2021 underscore a disciplined, organization-wide commitment to safety. Designation as a Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence further reflects high standards across specialized clinical programs.

Taking them together, these are not isolated achievements, they represent a system that is more reliable, more accountable, and safer for patients because of her leadership. Her work consistently translates strategy into results, ensuring that quality is not an initiative, but an expectation.

Lisa embodies nursing excellence through action, consistency, and impact. It is my distinct honor to nominate her for the Nassau Suffolk Nurse Excellence Award

SOUTH SHORE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Janice Baglietto, PhD, RN, CCRN-K

Professional Development Educator

Janice Baglietto embodies excellence. Her unwavering commitment to education, professional development, research, and patient-centered care has defined her career. Over three decades, her impact has strengthened interprofessional teams, and improved patient outcomes across our institution. She has demonstrated multiple achievements, particularly in education and clinical practice. Her impressive academic journey, culminating in a PhD from Molloy College, a Master's, and a bachelor's from Adelphi, has clearly laid the foundation for her deep passion for learning.

She continually strives to instill this passion in every new hire she successfully onboards as well as continually promoting certification and clinical ladder achievements. As an educator, she is the guiding force, shaping the skills and knowledge of countless nurses. She's served as a clinical and professional development educator for the high-acuity areas including the Cardiothoracic ICU and Cardiac Stepdown, telemetry units, Cardiac Catheterization, Electrophysiology Labs, the Neuro Interventional Lab, and Transesophageal Echocardiography services. Her hands-on guidance in developing and educating staff for both the Neuroscience ICU and our structural heart (TAVR) programs ensured every team member was expertly prepared for complex patient populations, directly enhancing patient safety and care quality.

As a role model she shapes the development and elevates the performance of every nurse she encounters. Her mentorship within the Critical Care Nurse Fellowship Program is truly legendary. Fellows call her the "mom" of their program, a testament to her unique ability to provide both comforting support and firm, expert guidance. They feel comfortable discussing their fears while deeply respecting her clinical skill and patience. This powerful blend of care and rigor empowers new critical care nurses, nurturing them into confident, high-performing professionals, strengthening our workforce and improving retention. Since 2011, she has served as a Master Fellow and Educator, and under her compassionate yet firm guidance, 39

cohorts (a total of 209 critical care nurse fellows) have flourished and transitioned into confident, competent Critical Care nurses.

What truly sets her apart is her proactive advocacy for nurses. Working tirelessly with AACN, our nominee brought the certification voucher program to our staff. This resulted in a dramatic increase in certified nurses, directly linked to better patient outcomes and the professional standing of our nurses. Her strategic vision was instrumental in the development and launch of our new Cardiothoracic Step-Down unit in 2025. She identified a patient flow concern and, partnered with the team to outline safety-focused criteria for the unit. She implemented education to cross train all RNs to CTICU and step-down care.

Janice's commitment to pushing the boundaries of nursing education shone through in her year-long effort to bring RQI to our hospital. She understood that two-year CPR certifications weren't enough and championed the need for continuous, hands-on learning. RQI replaces infrequent testing with quick, quarterly practice sessions to give real-time feedback. This means razor-sharp RN skills, directly translating into better outcomes for patients. Janice is more than an educator. She is an inspiring mentor and role model, and her legacy is marked by innovation and excellence.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

Susan D'Allessandro, RN

Registered Nurse

It is with great enthusiasm and without reservation that we nominate Susan D'Allessandro, an outstanding nurse leader, for the 2026 Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council Nurse of Excellence Award.

Susan exemplifies the highest standards of professional nursing practice, leadership, ethical conduct, clinical excellence, and compassionate, patient-centered care. For more than a decade, she has been a trusted leader, mentor, advocate, and role model whose impact extends across her organization, the nursing profession, and the community she serves. Her dedication has earned her both the DAISY Award and Nurse of the Year recognition at her facility, and she is currently a nominee for the prestigious NYONL DAISY Nurse Leader Award at the state level.

Her professional contributions reflect a deep commitment to advancing nursing excellence and improving outcomes. As a Safety Coach, active participant in Shared Governance, and former member of the Performance Improvement Committee, she has helped strengthen a culture of safety, accountability, collaboration, and evidence-based practice. She consistently demonstrates the ability to identify opportunities for improvement, engage others in solutions, and support meaningful change that benefits both patients and staff.

Equally impressive is her influence on the professional growth of others. She is a respected mentor who generously shares her knowledge, supports lifelong learning, and encourages nurses at every stage of their careers to develop confidence, competence, and leadership potential. Her approachable manner, integrity, and collaborative spirit create an environment where nurses feel valued, supported, and inspired to provide exceptional care.

One of the most powerful examples of her excellence involved a patient grieving the loss of a close family member who deeply wished to attend the wake and funeral services. Recognizing the emotional significance of this moment, the nominee immediately

advocated for the patient while maintaining a strong focus on safety. She coordinated care, expedited testing, collaborated with multiple disciplines, and remained actively involved after her shift ended. From home, she continued communicating with the care team to support a safe discharge plan. Because of her persistence, clinical judgment, compassion, and advocacy, the patient was able to attend the services while receiving the care necessary for a safe transition.

This example reflects what makes her extraordinary: she sees the whole person, not just the diagnosis. She honors what matters most to patients while upholding the highest standards of nursing care.

She is highly respected by colleagues across disciplines, including pastoral care, physicians, nursing leadership, and hospital administration, who frequently seek her guidance and expertise. Her professionalism, mentorship, collaboration, and commitment to excellence promote a positive and powerful image of nursing. Through her ability to improve systems, develop others, advocate for patients, and advance professional practice, this nominee embodies the very essence of nursing excellence. We proudly nominate her for the 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award.

ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL & HEART CENTER

Michele Claus, BSN, RN, CWOCN

Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse

It is my distinct honor to nominate Michele Claus for the Nassau-Suffolk Nurse Excellence Award. She consistently demonstrates exceptional clinical expertise, compassion, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to patient-centered care. As a Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse (WOCN), she positively impacts patients, families, and colleagues through her ability to combine evidence-based practice with empathy, exemplifying the highest standards of nursing excellence.

After earning her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2014, she quickly distinguished herself as a clinical leader, serving as both a preceptor and relief charge nurse. Committed to lifelong learning and professional growth, she completed the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing program in September 2024 and transitioned into the WOCN role at our facility shortly thereafter.

In collaboration with nursing leadership, frontline nurses, and the interdisciplinary team, she conducted a gap analysis to identify opportunities for improving wound, ostomy, and continence services. Under her leadership, she coordinates the hospital's monthly Skin Prevalence Day, assessing patients and collecting data related to pressure injuries and skin integrity. Through her expertise and focus on prevention, the hospital achieved a hospital-acquired pressure injury rate of 0.00% during the first quarter of 2026.

A passionate educator and clinical resource, she publishes a monthly newsletter, Reflections from Prevalence Day, sharing lessons learned, emerging evidence, and best practices in wound and continence care. She also partnered with the Chief Nursing Officer and fellow WOCNs across the health system to launch the Wound Treatment Associate (WTA) Program. This evidence-based initiative enhances nurses' knowledge and skills in pressure injury prevention and treatment, promoting professional development, clinical autonomy, and improved patient outcomes.

Her contributions extend beyond our organization. She was selected to present her abstract, "Advancing RN Competency in Ostomy Care Through an Evidence-Based Interactive Educational Workshop," at the 2026 WOCNext Conference. Developed to improve nurses' competence and confidence in ostomy management, the program combined didactic education with hands-on skills training to enhance knowledge and patient care. The abstract has also been accepted for publication in an upcoming issue of the Journal of Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing.

Michele's expertise, leadership, and dedication are evident in every patient and staff interaction. She provides compassionate care to individuals facing complex and life-changing diagnoses while fostering a culture of collaboration, learning, and professional growth. Through her commitment to excellence, innovation, and patient outcomes, she embodies the very best of the nursing profession and is exceptionally deserving of Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council's 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award.

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

Judmaelle Maitre, RN

Registered Nurse

I am proud to nominate Judmaelle Maitre for the 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award. She consistently demonstrates professionalism, compassion, and dedication in everything she does. Her commitment to providing exceptional patient care and supporting her team makes her an invaluable member of our department.

Judmaelle is an outstanding preceptor who goes above and beyond to support newer nurses. She is patient, approachable, and always willing to share her knowledge and experience. She creates a positive learning environment where new nurses feel supported and encouraged to grow both personally and professionally. Through her guidance and leadership, she has helped many nurses build confidence and strengthen their clinical skills.

She is also committed to continuously improving herself. She actively seeks opportunities to learn, grow, and enhance her practice to provide the highest level of care possible. Her strong clinical knowledge, critical thinking skills, and calm demeanor make her someone others naturally look to for guidance and support.

Judmaelle consistently demonstrates I-CARE behaviors in her daily interactions with patients, families, and coworkers. She treats everyone with kindness, compassion, respect, and empathy, always ensuring that patients feel heard, safe, and cared for. Her focus is always on achieving the best possible patient outcomes while maintaining dignity and compassion in every situation.

In addition to her clinical excellence, she brings positivity to the workplace each day. She always has a smile on her face and maintains a supportive attitude, even during stressful or challenging situations. Her positive energy, teamwork, and dedication have a meaningful impact on both staff morale and patient experiences.

She is truly a role model for newer nurses and a valued member of the healthcare team. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of recognition for Nurse Excellence than Judmaelle.

STONY BROOK EASTERN LONG ISLAND HOSPITAL

Holly Patrick, MSN, RN

Director of Education and Practice Development

Holly Patrick embodies the essence of nursing excellence. As the backbone of education and professional practice at SBELIH. She has consistently demonstrated unparalleled dedication, leadership, and passion, making her an ideal candidate for the 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award.

Holly has revolutionized our education programs, ensuring that all patient care service staff receive the necessary annual education and are prepared for any emergent training needs.

Despite facing significant staffing challenges this year, Holly has maintained her commitment to excellence, often operating behind the scenes to ensure seamless operations. Her innovative approach to onboarding new staff members has streamlined the process, significantly reducing transition times and improving staff retention. Holly's collaboration with HR ensures a smooth transition for new hires, setting them up for success from day one.

Holly's leadership style is both quiet and powerful. She leads by example, inspiring her colleagues to strive for excellence. Her mentorship has been instrumental in the professional growth of many nurses, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. Holly's ability to inspire and develop others is a testament to her exceptional leadership skills.

In addition to her internal contributions, Holly actively participates in community outreach programs, promoting the nursing profession and educating the public about the critical role nurses play in healthcare. Her efforts have significantly enhanced the public image of nursing, showcasing it as a noble and essential profession. Holly's dedication to fostering a positive public image of nursing is evident in her involvement in various initiatives that highlight the importance of the profession.

Holly's achievements are both varied and complex, spanning clinical practice, education, and administration. She has been a driving force in standardizing

policies and procedures across multiple hospitals, collaborating with our fellow Stony Brook team members to ensure consistency and excellence in patient care. Her work has not only improved the quality of care at SBELIH but has also set a benchmark for other institutions to follow.

Holly consistently goes above and beyond her daily responsibilities. She addresses staffing challenges with innovative solutions, ensuring that patient care remains uncompromised. Her ability to adapt and respond to unexpected situations demonstrates her effectiveness as a change agent. Holly's outstanding accomplishments have led to measurable improvements in patient care and staff satisfaction, making her an invaluable member of our leadership team.

In summary, Holly Patrick's unwavering commitment to excellence, her innovative leadership, and her profound impact on both education and patient care make her a deserving recipient of the 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award. Her contributions have not only elevated our institution but have also set a benchmark for nursing excellence. Her quiet leadership style and dedication to excellence often go unnoticed, but her impact is felt by all who work with her. She is a vital member of our leadership team and truly deserving of this recognition.

STONY BROOK SOUTHAMPTON HOSPITAL

Jesse Vardaro, RN, BSN

Nursing Quality Manager

Jesse Vardaro exemplifies the very best of the nursing profession, a leader whose impact reaches far beyond the bedside while never losing sight of the patient at its center. From beginnings in critical care nursing to a leadership role overseeing Nursing Quality, patient safety, patient flow, and operational improvement initiatives, this individual has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing healthcare delivery and improving outcomes for patients, staff, and the organization as a whole.

Throughout a distinguished career, Jesse has transformed challenges into opportunities for improvement. Through the development of innovative workflows, standardized processes, and accountability measures, measurable improvements have been achieved in patient access, care coordination, quality outcomes, and operational efficiency. Leadership efforts have contributed to reductions in delays to care, improvements in patient throughput, strengthened patient safety practices, and enhanced collaboration across the healthcare continuum. The ability to unite physicians, nurses, ancillary departments, and executive leadership around a common goal has resulted in sustainable improvements that directly benefit patient care.

Drawing upon a strong critical care foundation, Jesse possesses a deep understanding of the challenges faced by frontline caregivers and the patients they serve. That experience has been leveraged to influence care delivery on a hospital wide scale through leadership in Nursing Quality, patient safety, throughput optimization, and organizational performance improvement. A unique ability to identify system level opportunities, engage multidisciplinary teams, and implement lasting solutions has resulted in meaningful improvements that positively impact patient outcomes, operational performance, and the overall patient experience. Equally important is the ability to see both the needs of the individual patient and the broader healthcare system simultaneously.

Beyond formal responsibilities, Jesse serves as a mentor, educator, and trusted resource for colleagues throughout the organization. Through coaching, support, and leadership by example, a culture of accountability, collaboration, and professional growth has been fostered. Nurses and interdisciplinary team members alike are empowered to embrace innovation, pursue excellence, and remain focused on delivering exceptional patient care.

What truly distinguishes Jesse is a willingness to step forward whenever challenges arise. Whether leading multidisciplinary improvement efforts, addressing complex operational barriers, supporting frontline teams during periods of increased demand, or driving initiatives that improve safety and quality, this individual consistently exceeds expectations. Leadership is marked by integrity, visibility, and an unwavering commitment to doing what is right for patients and staff.

For significant contributions to nursing leadership, demonstrated effectiveness as a change agent, dedication to mentoring others, and measurable impact on healthcare quality and patient outcomes, Jesse is highly deserving of recognition as a Nassau Suffolk Hospital Council 2026 Nurse of Excellence Award recipient.

SYOSSET HOSPITAL

Gina Rider MSN, MBA, RN, CNOR, ONC

Clinical Professional Development Educator

In a setting where precision and teamwork determine outcomes, Gina Rider, a clinical professional development educator, consistently raises the bar for perioperative nursing. She is the person teams look for when cases are complex and timelines are tight, because her approach is calm, practical, and focused on safe, reliable performance.

Her professional journey demonstrates sustained achievement and breadth of experience. She began as an LPN immediately after high school, served eight years in the military reserve, and completed her ASN and RN, all while serving her country. She later earned a BSN, a master's degree in nursing education, and an MBA, combining clinical expertise with educational and operational perspectives. She maintains CNOR and ONC certifications and actively promotes specialty certification as a marker of quality. She is currently leading structured study sessions for fourteen perioperative nurses pursuing CNOR, providing resources, exam strategies, and case-based reviews that build confidence and competence. Her commitment to advancing the specialty extends beyond individual coaching. She has created a culture where certification is viewed as both achievable and essential, resulting in a potential 56% increase in certified staff members who bring enhanced knowledge and credibility to patient care.

Day to day, she created and implemented a structured preceptor development program that has standardized onboarding and contributed to near-zero surgical site infections and zero patient burns over the past 8 years; a direct reflection of the rigor and consistency she brings to clinical education. Colleagues describe her as consistently professional and polished, an approachable mentor who sets clear expectations and models them every shift.

Her effectiveness as a change agent is evident in measurable outcomes and strategic initiatives. She orchestrated the application for the NAON (National Association of Orthopedic Nurses) Orthopedic Nurse

of Excellence (ONE) award, coordinating stakeholders, compiling evidence of practice excellence, and aligning submissions with national standards to showcase the team's accomplishments. The unit is currently the only holder of this prestigious national recognition within the health care system and only the second to achieve this award in the system's history.

Her influence on engagement and workplace wellness has been transformative. She championed the implementation of Stress First Aid, a framework that equips staff to recognize and respond to stress and burnout in themselves and colleagues. This initiative won first prize across the healthcare system for its impact on fostering a healthy work environment. Through consistent coaching, recognition, and accessible learning opportunities, she has greatly contributed to an increase in employee engagement from 74% to 92%, creating a culture where nurses feel supported to ask questions, pursue certification, and deliver care with confidence. Her focus on the human side of perioperative practice has improved both the People Quality Experience scores and overall team morale, proving that clinical excellence and compassionate leadership go hand in hand.

For her sustained impact on education, practice, and measurable outcomes, including national recognition efforts, operational improvement, certification advancement, workplace wellness innovation, and a marked rise in engagement, this nominee is fully deserving of the Nurse of Excellence Award in 2026.

**NASSAU-SUFFOLK HOSPITAL COUNCIL
NURSE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD**

PRIOR RECIPIENTS

2025

DENISE DRISCOLL, Mather Hospital Northwell Health
LEE C. MOLDOWSKY, NYU Langone Hospital-Long Island
GISELLE GERARDI, Stony Brook University School of Nursing

2024

VINCENZA COUGHLIN, NYU Langone Hospital – Long Island
REWA THOMPSON – Stony Brook University School of Nursing

2023

LETICIA RIOS, NYU Langone Hospital - Long Island
MARIA MILAZZO, Stony Brook School of Nursing

2022

PATRICIA WOLOSZYN, Stony Brook University Hospital

2021

FAITH LYNCH, NYU Langone Hospital Long Island
MARIJEAN BUHSE, Stony Brook School of Nursing

2020

All Long Island nurses honored

2019

JUSTIN M. WARYLORD, Stony Brook School of Nursing

2018

LILA V. HAGEMAN-SHEEHAN, NYU Winthrop Hospital

2017

LISA A. KOSHANSKY, St. Catherine of Siena
Medical Center

2016

EILEEN DWYER, St. Francis Hospital

2015

CHRISTINE GLASER, Farmingdale State College

2014

RENEE GILCHRIST, North Shore University Hospital

2013

CATHERINE VIDETTO, St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center
LORI ESCALLIER, Stony Brook University School of Nursing

2012

ANULI A. ERIKE, Nassau University Medical Center

2011

LISA QUINONES, Suffolk County Community College

2010

DEBRA GIUGLIANO, Stony Brook University Medical Center

2009

EILEEN M. ROBERTO, Good Samaritan Hospital
Medical Center

2008

AMY B. PAKES, Nassau University Medical Center

2007

DONNA A. TANZI, Huntington Hospital

2006

MAY-LYNN ANDRESEN, North Shore - LIJ Health System

2005

KATHLEEN PERRO, St. Francis Hospital

2004

MADELINE COZZI-GOTTLIEB, South Nassau
Communities Hospital

2003

VIRGINIA REICHERT, North Shore University Hospital

2002

DONNA M. JOHNSON, Nassau University Medical Center

2001

SUSAN HOVANI, J.T. Mather Memorial Hospital

2000

KATHLEEN SOUTHERTON, University Hospital at Stony Brook

1999

KATHLEEN MILLER, Long Beach Medical Center

1998

ELIZABETH DEVINE, J.T. Mather Memorial Hospital

1997

ALICE FRIEDRICH, North Shore University Hospital
at Plainview

LONG ISLAND NOMINATIONS TO THE NEW YORK STATE NURSE OF DISTINCTION AWARD PROGRAM 1989–1995

RACHEL LIN, Komanoff Center for Geriatric & Rehab Medicine
(NYS recipient)

NANCY MAEHL, Veterans Affairs Medical Center

ELEANOR O'BOYLE, J. T. Mather Memorial

MILDRED O'CONNOR, Lutheran Center for the Aging

DARLENE PADUANO, University Hospital at Stony Brook

DOROTHY PESSOLI, Veterans Affairs Medical Center

CAROLYN VAN HELDEN, St. Charles Hospital
and Rehabilitation Center

SR. RITA VANSO, Mercy Medical Center

NURSE OF EXCELLENCE 2026 AWARD CEREMONY

