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St. Benedict Academy  
Alumnae Association  
**Newsletter**  
Summer 2025

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*"We'll always come to thee again, when alma mater calls."*

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# St. Benedict Academy: a legacy of women's empowerment

## Members of the Class of '69 continue to foster SBA spirit

**Sue Lackovic Koprowski** finds community when members of the Class of '69 gather. "Kathy Anysz, who died last December, was the initial impetus for gathering. She was our class president and one of the most welcoming, loving people I knew," said Sue. After graduation many of the class got married, had children, started careers, and saw each other only at reunions and SBA Alumnae Association events.

"But then our kids grew up and we got older," she said, "and that's when we started gathering for breakfast after church on Sunday mornings." As they began to retire, it became easier to meet on weekdays and by then classmates from all over the city were joining in so they started meeting at different local restaurants. "And then, in the summer, we did other things, like excursions. We'd all go over to Findley Lake, or Edinboro Lake, and visit the shops and eat. We've done bus trips—we went to New York City to mark our sixtieth birthdays, and we also went to Chicago to see *Hamilton*," Sue said. There are usually ten to twelve women at any gathering, with about twenty on the email list. They still participate in SBA events. "We usually have a couple tables at the Christmas Party, and our class prepares gift baskets."

As to the glue that holds these long-time friendships together, it was the SBA experience. "It's interesting," Sue said. "We weren't all friends in high school, we didn't sit at the same lunch tables, and weren't in the same classes. But over the past twenty years, we've become close. The special thing we share is the SBA experience." And what was that experience? Another classmate, **Ann Bauer Glaspell**, recalled that "we all felt like family at SBA."

Classmate **Karen Bertone Streett** shared similar sentiments. "No one really seemed better than anyone else, just sisters in the same family," she said. "Maybe it was because most of us were from middle class, blue collar, working families and that was somewhat of a binding force." Karen also thinks the sisters as well as the atmosphere at SBA were special. The sisters were forward thinking and supportive of everyone. "You could express yourself without worry about condemnation or derision. I don't ever remember not wanting to go to school," she said.

"Yes," said Sue, adding that "St. Ben's girls had an excellent reputation in the city — at job interviews all they needed to know was that you were from St. Ben's. And to this day, when I run into someone in an office or elsewhere and we discover that we are both



Classmates gather after a memorial Mass for their Class President, Kathy Anysz, who died unexpectedly last December. Back, left to right: Katherine Dzuricky Ditrich, Theresa Sybil Ignaczak, Jean Luschini Markiewicz, Ann Bauer Glaspell, Sue Lackovic Koprowski. Front: Brenda Suroviec Krawiec, Susan Kiehlmeier Custer, Pat Stull D'Annibale.

SBA alum, there is an immediate connection." For the Class of 1969, it truly is a story of "Friends we never can forget."

**Gerry Burchick Miller**, '69, is also part of a monthly meeting but it isn't with her classmates. Twenty years ago, after her husband died when she was only 53, Gerry met with her pastor at St. James and out of that conversation "Dinner for One Is No Fun" came into being. It started as a notice in the bulletin inviting those who had lost a spouse to gather at a local eatery. "When you lose your spouse," Gerry said, "life goes on for everyone else but you. Being alone wasn't anyone's plan." About eight people showed up for the first gathering; now about fifty people come to a space where it's ok to come alone and to have conversation with others who know your experience, and to make new friends.

Asked what it was about SBA that engendered such a concern for community, Gerry said, "the sisters were there for us. They were strong role models and very caring. I came from a divorced home, rare in those days, and at St. Ben's I had structure and felt safe and cared for." And now, so many years later, she says, "you gravitate back to what you knew was good, what made you who you are."

If you're in Erie and have lost a spouse and would like to go to dinner, call Gerry at 814-899-4443. There's nothing to join, no fees, simply come.



## SBA: a legacy of women's empowerment

**Have an address change?**

**Story to share?**

**Idea to highlight your class in the newsletter?**

**Email Linda Romey, OSB, Communications Office**

**[lromey@eriebenedictines.org](mailto:lromey@eriebenedictines.org)**

### Blizzard postpones SBA Alumnae Christmas

More than 250 SBA Alumnae attended the annual Christmas luncheon on March 30 — postponed because of Erie's blizzardy winter. Graduates from the 1950s through the 1980s enjoyed reconnecting and buying chances on nearly seventy gift baskets that lined the walls of the banquet room at the Ambassador Banquet Center in Erie. "It is amazing that so many women continue to gather and to remember and celebrate their years at St. Benedict Academy," said Sister Rosanne Loneck, a graduate herself and also a popular SBA teacher. The SBA Alumnae Association is more than a social organization—alum are committed to raising funds to support the good works of the Benedictine Sisters. "We are so grateful for the support of the alumnae," said Michelle Basista, Development Associate for the Benedictine Sisters. "The association itself is a major benefactor and many, many individual alums also donate. They continue to live the Benedictine values they learned so many years ago."



Sister Dianne Sabol, '70, and Oblate Margaret Kloecker, '68, were two of many alum who enjoyed a flashback to their high school years with a photo stand-in of two girls in SBA uniforms.

**Mark your calendars now:  
The 2026 Annual Spring Luncheon  
will be held on Sunday March 22, 2026  
at the Ambassador Banquet  
and Conference Center in Erie.**

### A request from the archives: Camp Glinodo

Greetings to all former Glinodo campers! In the early days of Camp Glinodo, there were three cabins on the grounds that the girls used from the 1930s to the 1960s. The cabins faced Lake Erie and all three had Native American names. Can anyone remember their names? Please let us know what you remember! Email or call Linda, [lromey@eriebenedictines.org](mailto:lromey@eriebenedictines.org) or 814-899-0614 ext 2409.



### SBA Bingo

is fun AND it raises funds for the ministries of the Benedictine Sisters! Christmas in July bingo is July 20—bring a new toy for a child at St. Benedict Child Development Center and receive a FREE additional pack of cards with your paid admission of \$25 (which includes a pack of nine cards). Location is the Polish Falcons Club, 431 East Third Street in Erie. Doors open at noon and bingo begins at 1:00 p.m. The kitchen and bar are open. Other bingo dates are October 12 and November 23.





## SBA Class of 1973 summer get-together

Spread the word! You are invited to an evening of hanging out with friends and classmates. Donna Sowieralski Heaps, who lives in Arizona, suggested a get-together when she visits the cooler climes of Erie. Donna rented the room we used for our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion so we could eat, drink, and stay for as long as our hearts desired.



It'll be a combo mini-52nd Reunion and 70th Birthday Celebration! Join us:

**Plymouth Tavern, 1109 State St.**

**July 26, 2025, 5:00pm - closing**

**Food and drink are available for purchase.**

So we can give the Plymouth a good count, please RSVP to Marilyn Hoderny Amento, [m.amento@verizon.net](mailto:m.amento@verizon.net), Text: 610-960-7338 or Elissa Scalise Powell, [Elissa@PowellGenealogy.com](mailto:Elissa@PowellGenealogy.com) by July 21.

## SBA Class of 1967 Annual Picnic

The Class of '67 annual picnic will be held Wednesday, August 13, at Veteran's Park in Millcreek. Further information will be coming in June via e-mail, or contact Janet (Romanowicz) Hammond, [hammondjanet@hotmail.com](mailto:hammondjanet@hotmail.com).



## Where Hope Is Audio Podcast

Although *Where Hope Is: Stories of Benedictine Influence*, the interview-based theater production by playwright Jenn Bokoch Gillett, premiered a year ago, the stories live on in the growing **Where Hope Is Podcast**. The play reflected a snapshot-in-time — the 1960s and 1970s — of the influence of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie as seen through the lives of the young women who attended St. Benedict Academy. The podcast series features interviews Jenn conducted over more than a year with SBA alumnae from classes of the late 1950s to the early 1980s. A new recording is posted every couple weeks and can be accessed via Substack where you can subscribe to receive an email whenever a new interview is posted.

**Scan the QR code at right to access the Where Hope Is Podcast.** You can also access them on the website of the Erie Benedictines, [eriebenedictines.org](http://eriebenedictines.org), under Good Work/Substacks and Blogs.


If you were not interviewed and would like to tell your story, please email Linda, [lromey@eriebenedictines.org](mailto:lromey@eriebenedictines.org)



*Let us pray for SBA alumnae who have passed into eternity.*




Deborah Quinn Gerbik '71  
Linda Swartz Kaleta '67  
Geraldine Vickey Valahovic '56  
Patricia Benecki Straub '59  
Barbara Cleaver McLean-Dierickx '60  
Dolores Harvey Freeland '48  
Kathleen Anysz '69  
Marilyn Gensheimer Stover '70  
Ann Pinzok Zimmer '66  
Rita Nowak Baker '48  
Patricia Mastrog Palotas '63  
Rosalie Nucerino Duffy '65  
Patricia Przepierski Gray '52  
Judy Chludzinski Miculandra '58


Arlene Smith Bidwell '59  
Shirley Gersims Sapper '45  
Kathleen Vash '80  
Ann Marie Dembski Larson '55  
Angeline Smith Wisinski '55  
Betty Stanopewicz Chwatek '63  
Denise Donofrio Lawson '71  
Lorraine Benczkowski Boncella '55  
Chrissie Thorwart Clark '85  
Lois Tomczak Kahle '62  
Therese Schroeck Wheaton '82  
Dorothy Moritz Wagner '59  
Christine Gorny Zapalski '44  
Kimberly Blimmel '80




### Where Hope Is Podcast

Stories of Benedictine Influence


 Substack
  Apple Podcasts
  RSS feed




**God is love and therefore we should be love**  
Mary Ellen Plumb, OSB '71...I wanted to...  
MAY 15




**The sisters were always pretty solid**  
Betsy Roebach Monsaive '66...it was...  
APR 16




**Erie born and bred...I love Erie**  
Mary Hoffman '70...I was going to go to St...  
MAR 27




**SBA allowed me to think bigger**  
Ann Michalski, '81...I walked away from St...  
MAR 6




**Trying to follow Jesus Christ**  
Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski '58...Right awa...  
FEB 19




**The ideal of social justice**  
Mary Dreisbach Clowin '66...I did not wan...  
FEB 6



**I loved all of them.**  
Judith Lorei '78 ...I learned to be 'really...  
JAN 27



**Right there for you to take.**  
Donna Sowieralski Heaps '73...she opene...  
JAN 12



**What have we learned here?**  
Sister Annette Marshall '61...and the closi...  
JAN 10

**Yearbooks needed for these years:  
1954, 1963, and 1967**

**If you would like to donate yours, please  
email [lromey@eriebenedictines.org](mailto:lromey@eriebenedictines.org)**

# Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Mount Saint Benedict Monastery  
6101 East Lake Road  
Erie, PA 16511

<<title>> <<first\_name>> <<last\_name>> <<suffix>>  
<<opt\_line>> <<prof\_title>>  
<<address>>  
<<address2>>  
<<city>>, <<state>> <<zip>>

Please alert Heather Cloutier, Benedictine Sisters Development Office, of any address changes. Call 814-899-0614, ext. 2573, or email [hcloutier@eriebenedictines.org](mailto:hcloutier@eriebenedictines.org). If you prefer not to receive a print copy of *The Mount*, please let Heather know. Current and past issues of *The Mount* are available on our website at [eriebenedictines.org/good-work/mount-magazine.html](http://eriebenedictines.org/good-work/mount-magazine.html).

## Sister Mary David Callahan: music, prayer, and wisdom that make a beautiful sound



“Accept the love you now receive/and share this light with all who seek.”

Erie Benedictine Sister Mary David Callahan was a gifted composer of religious music and hymns, many of which are still sung during ordinary daily Liturgy of the Hours at the monastery in Erie, now nearly twenty years after her death.

As a novice, our archivist had me watch a video of a workshop that Sister Mary David had given to the community in the 1980s about the experience of praying together through songs and psalms.

“Some of you,” she said, pausing dramatically, “don’t sing aloud because you think you don’t have very good voices. And... you’re right!

Most of you don’t. Most people in the world do not have very good singing voices. But when we sing together, and we work hard to hit the right notes at the right time, our voices blend and make a beautiful sound, one that is stronger with the inclusion of all voices. God loves to hear you sing. So sing out!”

Mary David, a musical child prodigy of sorts who composed a symphony with no instruments at hand beyond a pencil and a notebook and who was trained at the Eastman School of Music and Notre Dame, knew the truth that comes from Benedictine life, not only the facts in music theory textbooks. She knew that imperfect

voices are not to be hidden but to be used; that indeed, there are only imperfect voices. Yet in their being raised to God, they create real worship that is beautiful and that is beloved by God.

When Sister Mary David was novice mistress in the early 1960s, one of her novices was Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, who was a friend and mentor to me during my first years in community. She told me that decades after her novitiate, Sister Mary Lou wrote Sister Mary David a letter expressing what a profound effect her novice mistress had had on her life, thanking her for her many kindnesses, and telling her that she loved her. Mary Lou showed me a note in response in which Sister Mary David wrote that she was deeply touched by the letter, and that although she loved all her novices very dearly, she had never, in all her years, considered that Mary Lou might, in turn, love her. “The most beautiful thing in the world is to love without wondering whether it is required,” she wrote. “But I am so happy that it has been.”

Sister Mary David’s interactions with others were a means by which God’s light reached them, especially in the vulnerable moments of transition into monastic life. That she was able to offer mercy, wisdom, affection, and hope to them in a way that was completely pure of the desire to be loved or admired in return is the miracle of humility. It is the kind of thing that is perhaps “not possible for us [human beings] by nature” but which we trust that God can “make possible by grace.” (Prologue, Rule of Benedict) When this holy and loving humility is really embraced and expressed through a person who knows and accepts herself, recognizes God’s love for her and accepts it gladly, then all who encounter it are changed and blessed. The goal of Benedictine life is to become a person like that.

—excerpt from a paper by Sister Jacqueline Sanchez-Small for her monastic spiritual theology class

Scan QR code to listen to the St. Benedict Academy choral presentation *Encore ‘94* directed by Sister Mary David on April 30, 1994.

