

ALUMNI UPDATE

St. Dominic School

Spring/Summer, 2020



Special Issue: Alumni in Health Care During COVID-19

Nathan Heyka Class of 1993

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist



Nathan Heyka at work (above) and at St. Dominic School (below).

Nathan Heyka did not set out to become a nurse anesthetist. In fact, it's his second career. Working at the Cleveland Clinic now, he is on the front lines of the pandemic, though not directly treating COVID patients in his role.

After graduating from St. Dominic School, Nathan attended St. Ignatius High School and then the University of Wisconsin. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Communicative Disorders, thinking he would become a speech therapist. In his late 20's, he decided to make a change and earned his RN degree from Cuyahoga Community College. He followed that with a BSN from Ohio University and a Masters in Nurse Anesthesia from Case Western Reserve University. Nathan was drawn to nursing because it offers so many different opportunities. He says, "I like that every day is different at work. I've gotten to see a lot of very interesting things."

Nathan was drawn to healthcare because of his father's work as a doctor. His parents Rob and Kathy Heyka are St. Dominic parishioners. He says that because of his father's influence, he knew that he wanted to help others. It just took a little longer to realize he could do that in health care. He recommends that anyone who would like to go into the field of nursing spend some time shadowing someone at a hospital to get a sense of the job. While Nathan was at St. Dominic School, he learned about the importance of compassion. Those lessons helped him prepare for a career in medicine. He says that his faith has taught him to be a more compassionate person at work and at home.

Calling all SDS Alumni!
We'd love to share your story
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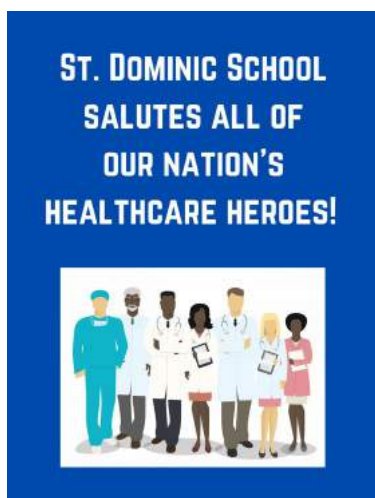


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Nathan Heyka (cont.)

COVID-19 has brought many changes. His temperature is checked as he comes to work each day, and he has to report any symptoms or signs of illness. He is required to wear his mask all day and to frequently wash his hands. As a nurse anesthetist, he is not working directly with COVID patients, and everyone is screened before he sees them. However, exposure is still a risk for anyone in the medical field. On a personal level, a scheduled conference on anesthesia was cancelled, which changed the plan for spring break.

Nathan lives in Bainbridge with his wife Michelle and their two children, Henry (6) and Katie (3).



Katie Renne at work (above) and at St. Dominic School (at right).



Katie Renne, Class of 2009

Physician Assistant

Katie Hankins Renne is a St. Dominic alum on the front lines of the pandemic. As a physician assistant in Pittsburgh, she works directly with patients who have tested positive for COVID-19. She lives with her husband Orlando Renne, whom she married in 2019. Her parents, Rick and Odette Hankins, are St. Dominic parishioners.

Katie graduated from SDS in 2009 and went to Beaumont High School. After that, she attended Duquesne University for both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. She always knew that she wanted to be in medicine, and as a PA she diagnoses illness, manages treatment plans, prescribes medications, and serves as a patient's primary care provider. She works closely with the physician and nursing professions to provide care. She loves the job because she is able to work directly with patients to provide all aspects of care.

Katie encourages anyone who is interested in becoming a PA to "stay focused and dedicated to schooling." She says that when the work gets intense, which it will, it helps to remember that careers in medicine allow you to help others, which is a gift.

While at St. Dominic School, Katie says that, "There was a big emphasis on science . . . and this is what started my love for human science and medicine." She also credits the school with teaching her lessons about hard work and perseverance, which have served her well in her later education and her career.

Her favorite memories are of the St. Patrick's Day Show, Field Day, and being in the band. She appreciates the friendships she formed and says that they are the reason for so many happy memories. Katie grew in her faith while at St. Dominic, specifically during Friday Masses with Father Tom and when she was able to sing with Mr. Carr. She says, "This foundation of faith has followed me through my life and has influenced many life choices and decisions that I have made along the way. In fact, I was able to get married at SDS in 2019, which has further strengthened my relationship with God."

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been a trying and scary time, Katie is proud that she has been able to help people who are suffering. The hardest part has been when patients lose their battle. She encourages all of us to continue social distancing and wearing masks. In her words, "These small things truly save lives."

