

Sally (Blitsch) Kelly & Patrick D. Kelly

Nurses Nurturing Their Young Annual Scholarship

Type: Annual

Amount:

Offered: One per year

Deadline: Refer to Allen College Institutional Scholarship Application

Established: 2026

Special Criteria:

About the Donors

Sally (Blitsch) Kelly has devoted more than six decades to nursing, education, and advocacy—a calling she often describes as sacred work. A proud Iowa native, her family is from Eagle Center and moved to Waterloo, where she attended St. Mary's and graduated from Columbus Catholic High School. There were six children, and as the eldest daughter she spent much of her childhood caring for her younger siblings, a role her mother recognized as evidence of Sally's deeply nurturing nature.

Her mother's value for education trumped Sally's ambition for water skiing, resulting in an application to study nursing at Allen. This set Sally on a path she initially resisted but in time gratefully embraced. Sally often jokes that she tried quit every week during her first year of nursing school, only to discover once clinical work began that she had found her true vocation. Looking back, she credits her mother's wisdom and persistence—and the support she received at Allen—with shaping the course of her life.

Sally earned her nursing diploma from Allen Memorial Lutheran School of Nursing, completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Coe College and later earned a Master of Science in Administration from the University of Notre Dame.

Professional Career and Service

Sally's nursing career spans leadership, clinical practice, teaching and advocacy across multiple states and institutions. She served as a staff nurse and nurse manager at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, worked in pediatric nursing at Allen Hospital and Hennepin County Hospital, MPLS. She held faculty roles at Allen Memorial School of Nursing, St. Luke's in Cedar Rapids, Mount Mercy College and Allen College. Her work also included staff development at Mercy Hospital, patient advocacy with Catholic Charities and a foundational role in opening Peoples Community Health Clinic, where she served as Clinic Nurse Coordinator.

At Allen Memorial Hospital, Sally held leadership roles as Nurse Manager for Pediatrics and Home Health, later serving as the Patient Advocate. Even after her formal retirement, she continued teaching at Allen College and currently is working as a UnityPoint Community Health Worker—finding, in her words, that nursing was something she could never truly give up. Some

of the pediatric patients she once cared for are now grandmothers, a reality that reminds her of the lasting impact of her work.

Life Beyond Nursing

Outside of her career, Sally has always loved being on the water. Water skiing and swimming were family passions, and she jokes that her original career goal was to become a professional water skier—an idea her mother supported, “after you finish college.” Sally also enjoys travel, especially her many trips to Ireland, and describes volunteer service in Haiti as a life-changing experience.

She treasures time with family and friends and speaks with deep affection for her husband, Patrick Kelly, whom she describes as witty, kind, fun and truly a good man. Throughout her life, nursing has brought her not only meaningful work, but also lifelong friendships, unforgettable stories and immeasurable joy.

Connection to Allen College

Allen Memorial Lutheran School of Nursing was Sally’s first experience with nursing and remains one of the most influential institutions in her life. She is deeply grateful for the mentors—especially early influences such as Miss Turner—who helped her develop respect for the profession and advocacy for nursing education. That foundation led her to return to Allen as an instructor, where she grew professionally and had the privilege of helping students discover their own calling to nursing.

After retiring from the hospital, Sally continued teaching at Allen College for several years, finding the same exceptional standards, faculty and students she had known throughout her career. Having taught in many nursing programs, she believes Allen consistently stands apart. She describes Allen students as the very best—individuals who possess both the knowledge and the compassion needed to serve God and community.

Scholarship Motivation

Sally and Patrick established the *Sally (Blitsch) Kelly & Patrick D. Kelly Nurses Nurturing Their Young Annual Scholarship* as an expression of gratitude for the education, mentorship and opportunities Sally received at Allen—from her earliest days as a student to her years as faculty and post-retirement instructor. She believes nursing is not a job or even a career but sees it as a vocation of sacred work.

They hope this scholarship will support students as they complete their education and begin lives of service. Their hope is that this scholarship will provide not only financial support, but encouragement—to help students love and nurture their families, patients, colleagues and one another and offer many years of rewarding opportunity to love and serve God by the Gospel’s teaching to care for the sick and the dying. Through this gift, Sally and Patrick hope to extend a legacy of compassion, faith and service that has defined Sally’s life and brought her profound fulfillment.