

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

by Shannon Williams

Robin Conklin '93HS
Residential School Nurse
Saint Mary's School

Robin Conklin '93HS is a key member of Saint Mary's COVID-19 Response Team and has worked tirelessly to help keep our community safe and COVID-19 free. (The following profile would have been posted as part of our alumnae staff profile series last month, but Robin has been busy keeping us all healthy!)

At Home at Saint Mary's

Robin grew up in Cary, N.C., and initially attended a public high school, which she explains, she did not enjoy. "One Sunday over Christmas break, I went with my family to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cary. We had a visiting Chaplain that day, and she was from Saint Mary's School. She spoke of Saint Mary's with such high praises, I told my mom we have to go see this school. It sounds like a utopia!"

Robin and her family visited Saint Mary's the following week, and Robin soon enrolled as a day student for the spring semester of her 11th grade year. She says she definitely thrived in the learning environment she found at Saint Mary's.

"For some reason, the floors in the Ragland hallways give me major nostalgia every time I go in the building. Who knew the floors of a building could give you the warm fuzzies," she says and laughs. "I thrived in the small classes in that same building while I was a student, and I admire the great respect the teachers showed students, which wasn't something I had always experienced in large public schools."

Some of Robin's favorite memories are of spending time with friends in the lounges around campus. "I would often spend the night with friends in the dorm on the weekends, which was always fun," she recalls. "I also have great memories of learning Scottish Dancing, taking water aerobics classes in the pool, sitting in the balcony of Pittman Auditorium during assemblies, and watching the Cold Cuts perform."

Living and Working on Campus

After graduating from Saint Mary's, Robin attended UNC-Wilmington and then



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worked for a small business in Raleigh for about ten years before deciding to go to nursing school. When she completed nursing school, she went to work at Duke Hospital in Durham, N.C., in the Neurology/Neurosurgery unit for five years.

Her next position was working for Duke's Alzheimer's Disease Clinical Research Center for two years. "At the same time, I attended and completed my graduate degree at Chapel Hill."

There, she earned a Master of Science in Nursing, with a concentration in Health Care Systems (an administrative and technology-focused degree for nurses). Just as she was completing her graduate degree, Robin saw that Saint Mary's was looking for a part-time nurse to cover a few weekends a month.

"It was a no-brainer for me to apply, given how much I loved the school during my time as a student," she says.

At the end of the school year, one of Saint Mary's full-time nurses left her position, and Robin was happily accepted as the school's newest, full-time, Residential School Nurse.

"Since then, I've been living and working at Saint Mary's with my husband and dogs," she explains. "We've been here for three years now and couldn't love it more!"

A self-described avid knitter, Robin also says she's an eternal optimist. "I also pride myself on being a great gift-giver, and I love all dogs everywhere. My friends call me the 'dog stalker,' because I have to pet every dog who crosses my path."

When asked if she believes Saint Mary's remains relevant today, Robin says, "The personalized attention and top-notch education that a girl can receive at Saint Mary's School is invaluable, particularly in today's world, which can feel overwhelming and uncertain. I've seen many girls go from 'surviving' to 'thriving' in just a few short months at Saint Mary's, and the transformation never ceases to amaze me. I know this would not be possible at most other schools. The social, emotional, and academic tools that they develop will remain a part of them throughout the rest of their lives."

Robin also offers advice for current students and young alumnae.

"From personal experience, I know it can take some time to figure out 'what you want to be when you grow up.' I encourage students to not put undue pressure on themselves or to have it all figured out while still in high school – or even while in

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their undergraduate programs. Life is full of opportunity, especially for a Saint Mary's graduate. If you're kind, confident, and educated, your path will become clear with time and experience," she says.

Robin also reminds them to savor their time spent at Saint Mary's and in college because it goes so fast. "The days are long, but the years are short."

Saint Mary's alumnae like Robin Conklin '93HS graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising their families, or leading as volunteers, our alumnae are agents for positive change in their communities. Robin's story demonstrates the ability of Saint Mary's women to do big things no matter the age or stage of their lives, and we're glad to share her story.

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