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GRYMES HILL

## Woman, 97, named an honorary nurse

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Ninety-seven-year-old Virginia McGinley Lawless finally achieved her lifelong dream on Thursday — she was named an honorary nurse by students at Wagner College.

About 40 students from Wagner College's nursing program, which partners with Eger Health Care and Rehabilitation Center in Egbertville, awarded McGinley Lawless a certificate of achievement to become an honorary nurse. She received a lamp and a pin, which are typically used during a pinning ceremony, and a Wagner College nursing T-shirt.

McGinley Lawless dreamed of becoming a nurse and was part of the first nursing class at Wagner College when the program was instituted in 1947. However, she wasn't able to finish school after one of her brothers died in World War II.

"She had to leave after one year to go help my grandmother," said Gerry Lawless, of her mother. "And at that time, she had just gotten a pin, they pinned her for her first year."

When student nurses from Wagner College met with McGinley Lawless and heard her story, they wanted to put together something special to honor her.

"The students came up with it," said Jilian Sheehy, an adjunct professor and nursing instructor at Wagner College. "They wanted to honor her somehow so they're making her an honorary nurse from Wagner College. They got her the pin, the lamp, the certificate and the T-shirt. They went all out with the balloons and the food."

Student nurses Victoria Smurygin and Alexis Picone were placed with McGinley Lawless in early October, and soon requested her every week.

"She was telling us her backstory, how she never became a nurse, so we just came up with the idea, let's do something nice for her," said Smurygin. "She's so nice with us, she's so patient. We came up with the idea,



Virginia McGinley Lawless, 97, with Wagner College nursing students Alexis Picone, left, and Victoria Smurygin.

let's make her an honorary nurse. Better late than never. We knew that she would love it."

Marybeth Kenny, Christine Gott, Brian Lawless, Gerry Lawless and Rick Lawless celebrated with their mother during the surprise ceremony.

"She spoke a lot about how her children are nurses and she always told us about her story," Picone said. "She really wanted to be a nurse and she just couldn't and she regretted that. So we thought we'll get the dean [of nursing] involved, we'll get a certificate."

Several of her children are in the health field: Brian Lawless is a chiropractor; Marybeth Kenny is the director of the Visiting Nurses Association; Ginny Lawless is a nurse at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital in Ohio; and Rick Lawless is a retired nurse from South Beach Psychiatric. Three of her grandchildren are also nurses: Tara Lafata is a nurse at New York University's intensive care unit; Erin Migdalen is a nurse at St. Francis Hospital in Long Island; and Jessica Capanna works as a case manager for Aetna.



From left: Marybeth Kenny, Christine Gott, Brian Lawless, Gerry Lawless and Rick Lawless, celebrate with their mother Virginia McGinley Lawless, during the surprise ceremony in which she was named an honorary nurse by Wagner College nursing students at Eger Health Care and Rehabilitation Center in Egbertville.



Virginia McGinley Lawless is presented a certificate by Wagner College students.