



Nazareth Coach Bickert Gets 350th Victory in Coaches vs. Cancer Basketball Game

By State Rep. Joe Emrick

I was on hand to watch Coach Rich Bickert earn the 350th victory of his career coaching the Nazareth girls' basketball team following the Blue Eagles 58-15 win on Monday against Northampton.

A 1974 graduate of Nazareth and a 137th District resident, Bickert took over the program in 2005 and led the team to district titles in 2013, 2015, 2016, 2020 and 2021.

While the win was a big one, it was also the "Coaches vs. Cancer" game, which uses the unifying influence of sports to promote healthy living and support the American Cancer Society's mission of ending cancer.

The above photo is courtesy of Nazareth Athletics.



St. Luke's Launches St. Luke's College of Health Sciences to Strengthen Regional Health Care Workforce

Sam Kennedy

BETHLEHEM - St. Luke's University Health Network is pleased to announce that its newly created St. Luke's College of Health Sciences has begun accepting applications for its inaugural class, which will begin in May 2026.

The College, which shares a campus with St. Luke's University Hospital – Bethlehem, is now enrolling students at www.StLukesCollege.org for the following programs:

- Radiography (Associate Degree)
- Respiratory Care (Associate Degree)
- RN to BSN (Bachelor's Degree)

In addition to its degree-granting programs, the College will also offer general education coursework.

Approval to establish the St. Luke's College of Health Sciences was granted in October 2025 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, marking a strategic step that will shape the future of health care education and workforce development in the Lehigh Valley and beyond.

"This is a historic milestone for the Lehigh Valley," said Mary Grace Simcox, EdD, RN, first president of the St. Luke's College of Health Sciences. "The launch of the St. Luke's College of Health Sciences reflects a bold commitment to strengthening our health care workforce by providing an affordable, local pathway to high-demand careers complete with guaranteed clinical placements, hands-on learning, small class sizes, and clear opportunities for professional advancement."

Respiratory Care and Radiography classes will be held at the Priscilla Payne Hurd Education Center, while the RN to BSN program will be offered fully online with a curriculum designed to support adult learners seeking non-traditional college experiences. Students will also have access to simulation and skills labs, study areas, and library resources.

St. Luke's longstanding partnerships with regional colleges and universities will continue while the new College expands the Network's ability to address workforce shortages in critical health care roles by broadening access to education. Even with these strong partnerships, the need to establish an institution of higher learning is critical, Simcox said.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care and social assistance sector is projected to experience the largest job growth of any industry between 2024 and 2034, driven by an aging population and persistent workforce shortages. Meeting this demand requires strong, accessible education pathways that support individuals at every stage of their professional journey.

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