The Love of COMMUNITY

Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield Magazine

IN THIS ISSUE

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

SSJ QUILTERS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS

HEALTHCARE MINISTRIES

SSJ • 577 Carew Street • Springfield, MA 01104-2328 • 413-536-0853 • SSJSpringfield.org
Dear Friends,

Sisters of St. Joseph throughout the world share not only a charism and spirit, we share a challenge from long ago:

“In honor of God the Spirit who is all love, they should so live that their Congregation may bear the name of the Congregation of the great love of God.”

-Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ

To be “the Congregation of the great love of God” is a tremendous blessing and responsibility. Greatly loved by God, we are compelled to bring God’s love into the world. Our Constitution and mission highlight our commitment to love. “Love one another as God has loved...love the dear neighbor without distinction.” The beautiful lyrics of a song reflect a truth that is close to our heart. “Love changes everything” and has the power to “turn our world around.” The choices we make to love each day reveal God’s great desire for unity with all creation and among all humankind.

This issue of Witness offers a glimpse into some of the adventures of women who are part of the Congregation of the great love of God. Their actions shed light on a passage from Corinthians. I invite you to turn the pages and see,

“Love is patient...and found in a quilting group of twenty years.

“Love is kind”...and very much part of a casserole, soup kitchen or food pantry.

“Love is always ready to trust”...as we build relationships and make new friends.

“Love is hope-filled”...and felt in the compassionate care of Sisters in health care ministries.

“Love is never boastful”...even as lives of service are recognized.

“Love endures whatever comes”...and is visible in the dedicated lives of our retired Sisters.

These “retirement ministries” often come with little or no compensation. It is your gift which helps to provide needed funds for these Sisters to continue in their ongoing ministries and also meet their basic needs.

We hope these stories will inspire you to partner with us in bringing a little more love and kindness into our world.

Ever grateful for your support,

Joan Ryzewicz, SSJ
President

Question: Your letters often encourage us to support the retired Sisters in their ministries. If they are retired, how are they still in ministry?

Answer: It is often noted that Sisters of St. Joseph have an unusual concept of retirement. For many, it means no longer having full-time work with a salary (or stipend). Because our life is guided by our charism, no longer earning a salary simply means finding other ways of continuing our mission.

Schools and after school programs are greatly enriched by the presence of volunteer professional teachers with both expertise and experience. To those in hospitals and nursing homes Sisters may serve as the only contact with their faith community: bringing the Eucharist, sharing a prayer, being a listener and an advocate. Within the congregation, retired Sisters serve as drivers and support staff.

Fact: After taking care of family, people leave bequests to who they most trust to carry on the mission in the future.

A very special way that you can continue to be our partner in mission, far into the future, is with a gift in your Will or Living Trust. Thank you!

Dear friends,

Today, I would like to share three thoughts on our MISSION:

- We are all partners in mission. Since their beginnings, the Sisters faithfully responded to the call to serve those in need. Always, remarkable friends, like you, supported them.

- Fact: After taking care of family, people leave bequests to who they most trust to carry on the mission in the future.

- A very special way that you can continue to be our partner in mission, far into the future, is with a gift in your Will or Living Trust. Thank you!

Karen Hoke
Executive Director

Friends of Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield

- New Trustees of the Friends of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield gathered in August to meet each other and the Leadership Team. Seated are Joe Flahive and Friends Executive Director Karen Hoke; standing are Sr. Joan Ryzewicz, Maggie Dumay, Cheryl Coakley Rivera, Jerry Norton, and Sr. Angela Deady. (Not in photo is new Trustee Kathleen Norton.)
Seven years ago, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield hit a critical crossroad in their history and future.

What would they do to remain financially solvent? One of the first steps they took was an unanimous vote in 2014 to sell their beloved motherhouse Mont Marie, and move elder Sisters from Mont Marie to new homes in Framingham, Holyoke, and Milton. The decision would positively impact the bottom line, but no one knew if the emotional cost of this direction would prove too high. Five years down this road, the Sisters will tell you there was grieving for what they lost, but joy in what they found after making all the right moves in all the right places.

Sr. Edie McAlice was in the hospital following a few falls, when she learned she would be moving to Bethany Health Care Center in Framingham. “It was mind blowing because I had no idea it was going to happen and I didn’t know what to think,” said Sr. Edie. A team of Sisters collected her belongings and helped her settle in to her new life.

“The first day, I was a little hyper with all the meetings and interviews, but by the time my head hit the pillow, I just had a feeling of peace. I felt like God was saying to me: ‘this is where I want you now Edie. This is your home, you’re going to be happy here.’ I woke up the next morning and I’ve been jigging ever since,” she laughed.

In Framingham, there are presently 27 SSJs who mix and mingle with friends from other religious communities and their “city cousins” (as Sr. Edie likes to call them), the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston. Sr. Edie says their shared mission, charism, and spirit draw them together: “They’re wonderful women. They seem very happy to have us, and they tell us we have brought joy into the house.”

When new residents come in, like Sr. Cathy Homrock, the Sisters welcome them right away and tell them they’re going to be happy here. “This is a good place to be,” said Sr. Cathy. “I want the Sisters in my community who may be wondering what’s going to happen to them next to know they don’t need to worry, because God finds a place for you. I love being in Bethany,” she added.

Daily support and visits from home keep everyone connected. “We knew it was essential to our community to not only maintain, but strengthen our ties,” said SSJ President Sr. Joan Ryzewicz. “We asked for four volunteers to serve as an on-site support team, and that has proven to be such a blessing. We also have several Sisters who make the trip from western Mass. to Framingham weekly to visit and catch up,” she added.

In December, the Leadership Team and more than 30 SSJs boarded a custom coach and “Fa La La La Laa-ed” to Framingham for a spirited holiday party full of fun, music, gifts, food, and fellowship.

“It’s a happy place, with all kinds of opportunity to grow or just have fun,” said Sr. Cathy. “There’s hardly a day goes by we’re not doing something interesting.” Sr. Edie says she’s “grateful to God that she brought me to Bethany. I have a wonderful spirit of retreat. They take care of you spiritually, physically, and emotionally. It’s marvelous.”

Fa-la-la-la-la: (from left) Sr. Diane Gaudet, Mary Pat Carr, Anne Marie Wildenhain, Pat Johnson, Frances Barry, Patty Murphy and Anne Carroll.
For 20 years, a very special group of women, known as the SSJ Quilters, has been easing the effects of pediatric cancer on area children and their families piece by piece, hand-making and donating quilts for young cancer patients in the Pediatric Oncology program at Baystate Children’s Hospital through Griffin’s Friends, a volunteer group named in honor of a 14-month old boy who died from cancer.

Bill Kelleher, Griffin’s father and the group’s founder, wanted to provide support to children and families fighting cancer, and he asked his friend and former co-worker, Sister Mary Quinn for help. “Bill knew the Sisters of St. Joseph sewed and quilted,” said Sr. Diane Tetrault, SSJ Quilter. “We were grateful and blessed to help.”

To date, SSJ Quilters have made 521 quilts, meeting once a month from September to May to sew. Sister Cathy Alaimo has seamlessly tied the group together through many transitions: “It’s been a mixed group, and a very rich group. We enjoy the camaraderie.” When Kathy Kroll joined the sewing circle, she was in the middle of cancer treatment herself, unsure of what she could bring to the table. “When I started, my skills weren’t at their peak, but that didn’t matter. I was very welcomed, and being part of this was a part of my healing process,” she said.

Presently, the group numbers nine quilters, but over the years has included up to 22 Sisters and 35 quilters. “We’ve never handed in a quilt we weren’t proud of,” Sr. Cathy said. “People are very creative and we’ve enjoyed it.”

The quilters usually give 10 – 12 quilts at a time. Their last donation was in August 2018. “We strive to give each child a quilt at one of their first appointments in the clinic, hopefully making a scary time a little less scary,” said Sue-Ann E. Hilton, Baystate Regional Cancer Program. “The quilts have provided endless hugs and warmth to many children over the years. Many of our families have commented years later how much these quilts meant to them,” she added.

Molly and Mary Kate Sullivan were students at Elms College, when they started running in the Griffin’s Friends Marathon Challenge. Sr. Carol Allan, Elms Campus Minister and SSJ Quilter, told the students about the sewing group and how they made quilts for Griffin’s Friends. The girls enjoyed crafts and decided it would be a wonderful way to further contribute to the cancer support group. “The quilts are beautiful, wrapping each child in love, support, and hope,” said Molly Sullivan.

Ariel, who is the Sullivan’s team captain since they began running, when it was recommended she go to Boston for care, the Sullivans suggested the quilters make a special quilt for the girl who would now be far from home during treatment. The quilters agreed. “We were thrilled when Ariel received her quilt, and to learn that she loved it,” said Molly Sullivan. “The quilt was a unique way to recognize her extraordinary strength.”

Everyone is welcome to join the SSJ Quilters, and continue this warm legacy of charism.

To learn more, contact Sister Cathy Alaimo at 413-322-8972.
As a Sister of St. Joseph, it’s Ginny Maitland’s mission to unite neighbor with neighbor, and neighbor with God.

As an interfaith hospital chaplain at Baystate Medical Center (BMC) in Springfield, it’s her ministry that helps her actualize that all may be one. “My role is to take each person, and connect with their desire for God’s healing, God’s peace, and God’s grace,” she said.

Her work badge identifies her as Virginia Maitland, Chaplain, and while some may ask about her religious denomination, most don’t know that she’s Catholic, and she’s fine with that. “I can say, in my 18 months here, that never really mattered. It never got in the way for non-Catholics, and sometimes it helps with Catholics, especially at the end of life. I’m just so aware of how so many people, no matter what their religious background, turn to God in their illness, for prayer, for blessing, to be with them in their surgery.”

Sr. Ginny says she’s blessed to work at a hospital where spiritual well-being is valued. “Baystate is not considered a religious hospital,” said Maitland, “and yet my experience is that it’s a very religious hospital. The patients and the staff embody God, and they seek to deepen that in their time of need for healing.”

Job satisfaction is knowing she’s made a difference. “Just once a day, if a patient says ‘I needed this talk today,’ and it might have been just twenty minutes, it’s not long, then I know there was at least one reason why I was here today, and I totally believe that where one Sister of St. Joseph is, than all of us are.”

As a Sister of St. Joseph, it’s Ginny Maitland’s mission to unite neighbor with neighbor, and neighbor with God.

As an interfaith hospital chaplain at Baystate Medical Center (BMC) in Springfield, it’s her ministry that helps her actualize that all may be one. “My role is to take each person, and connect with their desire for God’s healing, God’s peace, and God’s grace,” she said.

Her work badge identifies her as Virginia Maitland, Chaplain, and while some may ask about her religious denomination, most don’t know that she’s Catholic, and she’s fine with that. “I can say, in my 18 months here, that never really mattered. It never got in the way for non-Catholics, and sometimes it helps with Catholics, especially at the end of life. I’m just so aware of how so many people, no matter what their religious background, turn to God in their illness, for prayer, for blessing, to be with them in their surgery.”

Sr. Ginny says she’s blessed to work at a hospital where spiritual well-being is valued. “Baystate is not considered a religious hospital,” said Maitland, “and yet my experience is that it’s a very religious hospital. The patients and the staff embody God, and they seek to deepen that in their time of need for healing.”

Job satisfaction is knowing she’s made a difference. “Just once a day, if a patient says ‘I needed this talk today,’ and it might have been just twenty minutes, it’s not long, then I know there was at least one reason why I was here today, and I totally believe that where one Sister of St. Joseph is, than all of us are.”

Sr. Betsy Sullivan is a patient care advocate at the Sister Caritas Cancer Center in Springfield.

In this position, Sr. Betsy reviews records for qualifying patients and introduces them to the program. She meets with patients who come in for daily chemotherapy treatment and makes sure all their concerns and questions are answered before directing them to the appropriate physician, nurse or social worker.

“I am totally amazed at the honesty, the openness, and the sincerity of people,” said Sr. Betsy. “I know this is a very vulnerable time in their lives and I feel blessed and very privileged to walk this journey with them. It’s really a very sacred experience for me,” she added.

Sullivan also feels strongly that her role at the Caritas Center is a continuation of the SSJ mission. “We’re reaching out to the dear neighbor and entering their lives when they may be most fearful. I always conclude my visits with people by saying ‘I will hold you in prayer, and ask God’s healing graces for you, and the courage to continue the journey.’”
It’s just a casserole!” According to Sr. Barbara Faille, that was the line, in 1987, which got the Sisters of St. Joseph involved in Sr. Kathryn Flanagan’s ministry.

“Initially,” Sr. Kathryn explains, “we simply became aware of a local effort by area churches to feed the hungry. There were so many people out of work. We had to help meet the need.” She asked the SSJs in the Pittsfield area to prepare and serve casseroles on Wednesdays. “Of course, we soon learned that the casseroles were giant-sized!” laughs Sr. Barbara.

What started as a weekly meal eventually became St. Joseph’s Kitchen, a multi-faceted soup kitchen and food pantry. Today, different religious groups take turns feeding a hot lunch to more than 300 families each day.

Local community clubs also get involved. “People drop by after work, still in their suits and dresses, to help pick up or wash dishes,” says Sr. Kathryn. “Or they drive up and unload boxes of groceries or produce. Once when schools closed for a snow day, students showed up to help carry boxes of food.”

“It’s really a community-wide collaboration,” she explains. Farmers donate in-season produce. Local businesses and individuals contribute a variety of donations.

Sometimes people need help with bare necessities like buying prescribed medications or paying a gas bill. Once, someone quietly asked if the Sisters could spare some toilet paper.

In early September volunteers begin showing up at the kitchen to make pies for the “Thanksgiving Angels” program. In November parishioners from local churches gather to prepare food baskets for at least 1,500 families.

Local companies provide vans and a bus for food deliveries and transporting additional volunteers who don’t drive. A steady stream of volunteers pass out coffee, hotdogs, chili, and even windbreakers to people who are standing outside, in long lines, waiting for their turkey dinners with all the fixings. There is a sense of happy camaraderie shared by caring community members and those in need.

“There are different kinds of hunger,” Sr. Kathryn notes. “People come for the companionship and because they feel welcomed.”

“We always mingle and talk with people,” she continues. “In a way, we are a family. We strive to do ‘the more,’ as our Foundress directed. If you go back into the history of our Sisters, this is how we’ve always done it.”

Sr. Shirley Ann Davis’ love of community was honored this spring during a Founders’ Day Ceremony at the College of St. Joseph in Rutland, Vermont, which was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1956.

The native Vermonter and graduate of the college received the Sisters of Saint Joseph Humanitarian Award (previously Pour le Merite) honoring outstanding individuals from the region whose lives reflect a commitment to the importance of community service and concern for others. Sr. Shirley Campbell says Sr. Shirley Davis embodies what the award was intended for. “She is exactly that, a humanitarian, a woman of faith, a woman who gives everything she has to make the world a better place.”

Education has been the primary ministry of this Sister of St. Joseph for almost 64 years. Sr. Shirley has taught primary and junior high grades in Rutland at Christ the King School and math and science at the high school level at Mount St. Joseph Academy in Rutland. She’s been a principal and president and a superintendent. Sr. Shirley was vice president of her Rutland SSJ Congregation for five years and served a ten year term on the Formation Team. Currently, she serves on the Board of Directors of CSJ and continues to be active locally as a mentor, a tutor and a foster grandparent among other roles. Sr. Shirley says giving children in need a “special someone” is something she “absolutely loves.”

The Leadership Team of the Sisters of Saint Joseph says they were happy to nominate Sister Shirley for this award because she is committed to serving the “dear neighbor without distinction” and she does so with “a good mind, kind heart and selfless dedication.” And her community has answered, with ongoing support and love in return.
FRIENDRAISERS

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield hold several fundraisers a year as a way of helping defray costs of ministering to the dear neighbor and caring for elderly and infirm Sisters. Just as importantly, these events provide an opportunity to reconnect with former students, colleagues, and friends. Sincere thanks are extended to all who participate and support the success of these events.

22nd Annual Golf Classic

The 2018 SSJ Golf Tournament at the Springfield Country Club in West Springfield was a beautiful day of friendship and community spirit supported by nearly 200 golfers and more than 80 local businesses and organizations. Trophies were awarded and the winners of raffles and the silent auction were announced at the celebration dinner following the tournament.

Proceeds from the event benefit the care of the retired Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield.

6th Annual Irish Gala

Nearly 500 people got their green on early for the sixth annual Sisters of St. Joseph Irish Gala, held at the Castle of Knights on Memorial Drive in Chicopee, February 24, 2019.

The beginning of St. Patrick’s Day festivities in the area, the event featured traditional Irish food, including the Sisters’ homemade Irish soda bread, drink, and dance.

Special guests and performers included the 2019 Grand Colleens of the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Parade, and students from the Black Rose Academy of Irish Dance.

Proceeds benefit our retired Sisters, and we thank all our generous supporters!

RIGHT: A lovely young lass from the Black Rose Academy of Irish Dance.

Irish GALA
February 24, 2019
Castle of Knights
Chicopee, MA

 Save the Date

August 26, 2019 • Springfield Country Club

GOLF CLASSIC
Sisters of St. Joseph
OF SPRINGFIELD

Contact: St. Eleanor Harrington
golfclassic@ssjspringfield.com

TOP: “And we’re off!”
MIDDLE: Winning Foursome (left to right) Mark Margiotta, Kevin Hickey, Peter Quinlan, Sr. Connie Quinlan, and Andy Granger.
BOTTOM: Maggie and Dr. Harry Dumay.

Please use the convenient return envelope inserted in this issue of Witness to make or renew a gift. Your gift may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes.

Slainte!
The Call

Novices Leila Sullivan and Deirdre Griffin are preparing for their initial profession of vows. A prayer ritual was held for Leila on February 6, 2019.

Awards

Sr. Kathleen Keating, president emerita of Elms College and former SSJ president, received the Christian Charity Award from the Ancient Order of Hibernians James A. Curran Division One and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians of Hampden/Hampshire Counties. Sr. Kathleen was honored for improving the lives of the people in Hampden and Hampshire Counties.

Sr. Jean Bostley received the 2018 Berkshire Interfaith Organizing’s MICAH award, for her ministries throughout the Pittsfield area for the past 50 years. A longtime librarian at St. Joseph’s High School, she also delivered weekly Meals on Wheels and Sunday Take and Eat meals to shut-ins, and consulted for the National Catholic Library Association.

Sr. Maureen Kervick was honored in February at a dinner in Manderville, Jamaica, where she has lived and worked since 2010. She was recognized for her outstanding contributions to the Passionist Community in Jamaica, and especially for what she has accomplished institutionally over the course of the last two years, guiding a process that involved major transitions.

Sr. Julie Sullivan was honored by the St. Thomas More Society at the annual Red Mass in September. Sr. Julia was recognized for her education and justice ministries as a teacher, principal, and counselor to inmates at the Berkshire County Jail and House of Correction.

MICAH awards honor someone from their faith community who embodies the call of the prophet Micah to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

Sr. Maureen Kervick was honored in February at a dinner in Manderville, Jamaica, where she has lived and worked since 2010. She was recognized for her outstanding contributions to the Passionist Community in Jamaica, and especially for what she has accomplished institutionally over the course of the last two years, guiding a process that involved major transitions.

Sr. Julie Sullivan was honored by the St. Thomas More Society at the annual Red Mass in September. Sr. Julia was recognized for her education and justice ministries as a teacher, principal, and counselor to inmates at the Berkshire County Jail and House of Correction.

MICAH awards honor someone from their faith community who embodies the call of the prophet Micah to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

Sr. Jean Bostley received the 2018 Berkshire Interfaith Organizing’s MICAH award, for her ministries throughout the Pittsfield area for the past 50 years. A longtime librarian at St. Joseph’s High School, she also delivered weekly Meals on Wheels and Sunday Take and Eat meals to shut-ins, and consulted for the National Catholic Library Association.
SSJ WISH LIST

For care and maintenance of our cemeteries at Mont Marie and St. Michael’s:

• Gravestone Marker Restoration $3,000
• Statue of St. Joseph Restoration $1,500
• Landscaping $3,600

To make a gift, please use the envelope inserted in this issue of Witness. Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

SSJ Golf Classic
Springfield Country Club, West Springfield
Monday, August 26, 2019 @ 8 AM & 1 PM

SSJ Spaghetti Supper
Castle of the Knights, Chicopee
Wednesday October 23, 2019 @ 4:30 PM

For sponsorship information, please call Sr. Eleanor Harrington at 413-536-0853.

Love of Community
Day of Prayer
Led by Alden Solovy
March 9, 2019
Mont Marie