

SPRING 2015
VOLUME 24

The
Legacy
Continues



Witness



The Legacy Continues



Dear Friends

Reaching out to the dear neighbor has always been at the heart of what it means to be a Sister of St. Joseph. Since our founding more than 350 years ago, we have worked to divide up the cities in which we live to identify the unmet needs, especially of the poor and marginalized.

This past year, as we faced financial pressures that threatened to impact our ministries and our ability to care for our Sisters, we made some important and difficult decisions.

Our Sisters chose unanimously to sell our only large material asset, our beloved Mont Marie motherhouse property, and to move our retired Sisters to facilities of other religious congregations where expenses could be shared. Through the generosity of the Springfield Diocese and a local parish, we also relocated our administrative offices to a former rectory. These changes will allow us to bridge the remaining financial gap with fundraising efforts.

Now, with some of the heaviest financial burdens addressed, we can wholeheartedly focus on the many neighborhoods in which our Sisters live and work. In this issue of Witness you will see how our Sisters have established ministries in many kinds of neighborhoods - in parishes, schools, afterschool programs, jails and agencies. Where we are no longer able to be present in significant numbers, we have established means for our legacy to continue through empowering others or through our presence on boards of directors. As you read, see for yourself what the support of friends like you continues to make possible.

We are truly grateful to you for enabling our mission to go on. You, too, are neighbors dear to us. We ask God's continued blessings for you and for all whom you love.

Maxyne D. Schneider, SSJ
President

EDUCATION

PARISH MINISTRY

PRISON MINISTRY

JUSTICE & PEACE

PASTORAL CARE

HEALTH CARE

FRONT COVER:

SR. ST. LOUIS PAQUETTE READS TO A YOUNGSTER CIRCA 1990; SR. PATRICIA MURPHY HELPS A CHILD IN THE ST. JOHN'S ASCENSION PARISH AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM.



Sr. Mary Ferguson
Development Director

Wish List

One of the many consequences of the sale of Mont Marie is that we no longer have an immediate housing option for Sisters who need support or care. To address this need, we hope to modify a house we own in Chicopee to make it usable and handicapped friendly for our elderly and infirm Sisters.

Handicapped-accessible bathroom:

Redesign for accessibility	\$2,500
Sink	\$400
Toilet	\$400
Shower head	\$100
Grab bar	\$100

First floor renovation for Sisters unable to use stairs:

New wall and doorway	\$500
Paint and carpet	\$500
Bed	\$400
Bureau	\$300
Recliner	\$250
Television	\$200

Health Care Center: New Owner, New Name

Mont Marie Health Care Center has changed its name to Mont Marie Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center following the transfer of ownership from the Sisters of St. Joseph to Marquis Health Services. The transfer followed the sale of the Mont Marie campus to Marquis' parent company, Tryko Partners, in December of 2014.

From the Director's Desk

Q. Many Sisters in your congregation have had to relocate because of the sale of Mont Marie. How are they doing and are they still a part of your congregation?

A. *Our Sisters who have relocated because of the sale of Mont Marie remain members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield. By living with women religious in similar circumstances, we are able to share expenses and thus help to reduce our costs.*

Though distance presents new challenges for us, the many means of modern communication are a great help. We have a support team available to those at a distance, and personal visits are happily anticipated and greatly enjoyed.

This situation presents us with yet another opportunity, true to our charism, to welcome the stranger as neighbor, and to continue to live and work that all may be one.

Q. With the sale of Mont Marie, your financial situation must have improved. Why do you still need our help?

A. *The sale of Mont Marie and the move of our retired Sisters have greatly reduced our operating expenses, but a substantial gap in funding still remains. Before once again turning to you for help we wanted to have done everything we could to help ourselves. We now ask you to help us close the gap.*

The care of our elderly and infirm Sisters is a priority for us, as are our ministries. Many of our Sisters continue to respond to our early directive to perform all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy of which woman is capable. We minister in educational programs, parishes, social and health ministries, etc. Often these come with a meager salary.

You are our "partners in mission" as we faithfully strive to respond to our charism and mission. So much of what we are able to do would be impossible without your continuing support.

Our benefactors and their intentions are remembered in the prayers of the Sisters each day. May God continue to bless you as you bless us by your generosity.

EDUCATION

Like a building with a strong foundation, a ministry founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph is often established with the idea that it will be able to sustain itself even as the Sisters move on to other things. While hard work, planning and organization are key, the glue that holds these programs together is the SSJ mission to love the dear neighbor.

The Legacy Continues



Elms College

When the Sisters of St. Joseph founded Elms College in 1928 they were charged with training a handful of young women to be teachers. This year, more than 1,500 students are enrolled at the co-educational institution, choosing from among 33 majors including nursing, social work, and business.

The college credits its success with its ability to build relationships and develop a sense of community for their students – values strongly held by the Sisters of St. Joseph. While there are fewer Sisters on campus, their influence is still felt today as they serve as campus ministers, faculty and trustees.

Sr. Kathleen Keating, former Elms College President, says with a larger and more diverse population, the college continues to offer academic excellence and a strong sense of service. “Through the faculty, staff and students the college plays a vital role in uniting neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.”

Gray House

It was the need to assist families in Springfield's North End that drove five ambitious Sisters of St. Joseph to rescue and refurbish an old Victorian house 32 years ago. Today, the Gray House is a welcoming place where children attend afterschool programs, or where their parents might stop by for free groceries or one-on-one tutoring in English.

Sr. Cathy Homrok is one of the two SSJ founders still living at the Gray House. She says it has been a privilege and a joy to see their dream unfold and grow.

"I feel so blessed, and I know Sr. Jane Morrissey does as well, to see the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph still so alive here in the staff, volunteers, and benefactors who continue to serve the countless number of people who come to the Gray House. They come knowing that they will be received with respect and caring assistance." SR. CATHY HOMROK



ABOVE::
SR. BARBARA HESSELTON
TEACHES LANGUAGE SKILLS
AT THE GRAY HOUSE.



House of HOPE



SR. MAXYNE SCHNEIDER VISITS WITH CHILDREN AT HOPE.

It has been almost 20 years since the seed of HOPE was planted in Gardner, Massachusetts by four Sisters of St. Joseph. They identified violence as one of the leading public health threats in the region and decided to address it through education, mentoring, leadership training and the fostering of spiritual values.

It has been a successful formula. The House of Peace and Education now serves about 300 people annually. It provides computer and job skills training to low income women. It offers mentoring and tutoring programs for children and their families, and it runs a summer camp and a teen program.

One of the founders, Sr. Nancy Welsh, says the intention of the Sisters was always to give HOPE a solid foundation and then ultimately turn it over to a new CEO and the people of Gardner.

"That dream has been realized and today nineteen years later, though the Sisters have moved on, HOPE is still going strong!" SR. NANCY WELSH

Homework House

Looking for a way to keep Holyoke youngsters from joining gangs, Sisters Maureen Broughan and Jane Morrissey founded Homework House Holyoke in 2006. Since then the free afterschool tutoring program has grown and now serves about 115 children a year.

Providing more than just academic help, the 200 volunteer tutors are positive role models who mentor the youngsters in self-improvement. And all this is done in a loving and caring environment.

The success rates are impressive. Many of the students go on to high school and even college with new academic and life skills.



The ministry has grown thanks to the staff and volunteers, and generous community support. Sr. Maureen says, *“It is exciting for me to think how Homework House, which was born out of a dream of two Sisters of St. Joseph nine years ago, is thriving through the work of our Partners in Mission.”*



CLOCKWISE, TOP LEFT: SR. MAUREEN BROUGHAN CONGRATULATES STUDENT; SR. JANE MORRISSEY GETS A HUG; SR. MARY T. SHEA TUTORS.

St. John's Ascension Parish Afterschool Program



SR. PATRICIA IS PICTURED WITH YOUNGSTERS IN THE ST. JOHN'S ASCENSION PARISH AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

In 2012, when Sister Pat Murphy was asked to serve as director of a new afterschool program in Worcester's underserved Union Hill neighborhood, she never wavered. “All my life I've had a love for children. That's why I stayed in education,” said Sr. Pat. “We unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God and these kids have a great need.

With 40 years of experience as a teacher and principal, Sr. Pat heads the all-volunteer program at the former Ascension parish hall. Volunteers tutor kindergarteners to sixth graders from Union Hill School. “We provide a safe environment where they can have a snack, play and then receive assistance with their homework,” said Sr. Pat.

When asked why she agreed to work with the children from one of Worcester's inner city neighborhoods she replied, “To make them feel important and that somebody cares about them.”

“It just confirmed to me that it was part of God's plan to have an educator like her who was available and willing to do it and she's been just terrific. They just love her.”

FR. JOHN MADDEN, PASTOR, ST. JOHN'S PARISH



LEFT TOP
A SISTER TEACHES A CCD CLASS AT HOLY ROSARY PARISH IN HOLYOKE CIRCA 1950.

LEFT BELOW
SR. MAUREEN GRIFFIN MAKES A PASTORAL CARE VISIT TO THE LATE SR. VERONICA BROWN IN HOLYOKE.



As you have heard from us over the past year, our congregation has faced tremendous financial challenges that we have actively worked to address. By making many difficult choices - including the decision to sell our beloved home, Mont Marie - we have reduced the projected deficit in our retirement funding from \$40 million to \$5 million.

Having done everything possible for ourselves before turning to our supporters for help, we are now in the planning phase of a major gifts campaign. You will hear from us soon with more information about the campaign and the opportunity it presents to help support our retired and infirm Sisters. *Our goal of \$5 million will allow all of our Sisters to live out their lives with care and dignity.*

We have lovingly committed ourselves to a life of poverty for the benefit of others, but there are still basic bills to be paid such as health care, food and other day-to-day expenses. Most Sisters of St. Joseph have not had the advantage, however, of earning a wage that allowed for retirement savings.

We pray that those we have touched over the years will pledge their commitment to give as generously as possible. This will be a meaningful opportunity to honor the legacy and ensure the future for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield.

MAJOR GIFTS CAMPAIGN

The Legacy Continues



The Sister Mary Dooley

The Sister Legacy Circle recognizes the generous intent of those benefactors who have made future plans for our support. Members will be invited to a special social event each year, and will also receive helpful and interesting planned giving news from us.

For more information, or to confirm with us the details of your existing plans for a legacy gift, please contact Nancy Delson at (413) 536-0853, x317, or ndelson@ssjspringfield.com

The Sisters of St. Joseph have a long history of building relationships with their neighbors, always working to provide an environment of justice. That work is alive and well today as you'll see in these inspiring ministries.

Community Organization

As coordinator of the congregation's Office of Justice and Peace, Sister Denise Granger acknowledges there is a wide-ranging list of causes and tasks. "Part of the problem is, there's hardly anything out there that is a 'just relationship'. You're dealing with some really ugly things: racism, anti-Semitism, greed, power. There's very little you can actually do to change the system. It's a series of little pushes - sign this, write your legislator, pass this information along."

Sr. Denise works in coalition with other faith-based organizations, and educates her fellow Sisters on both national issues - a recent focus on human trafficking, for examples - as well as more local concerns, such as the Pioneer Valley Project and the Holyoke Basic Needs group. She also coordinates



SR. DENISE DELIVERS WINTER CLOTHING TO CHILDREN IN A HOLYOKE SCHOOL.

some Congregational activities, such as socially responsible investing and coordinating a clothing drive for local children.

"The goal of our Congregation is connecting neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God, and the whole concept of 'neighbor' eventually leads you to 'just relationships'. Therein lies much of the grist of our job." SR. DENISE GRANGER

Labyrinth Ministry

"Technically I'm supposed to be retired, but I've been doing labyrinth training pretty much full time - I'm writing my third book."

SR. LORRY VILLEMAIRE

What began as an interest has grown into a far-ranging ministry that has brought labyrinth-walking into schools, organizations and even prisons. Sr. Lorry's prison ministry has resulted in the first in-ground labyrinth in a correctional facility in the country.

"The men took to it," she says, simply. "It's a very peaceful atmosphere, probably the only time during the day or even the week where they are able to experience a nice, quiet atmosphere and think about their lives. They realize that, if they are to make it on the outside, they need to work on their spiritual life."

As to the future, Sr. Lorry, age 80, says that the Labyrinth Connection of Western Mass., which she helped found, has many capable hands ready to take over and carry on the ministry.

SR. LORRY LEADS A LABYRINTH WALK AT THE HAMPSHIRE COUNTY HOUSE OF CORRECTION.



Social Work Ministry

In her tenth year as an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Western Connecticut State University, Sister Kathleen Hinga marvels at the winding trail that brought her to this point in life.

Like most Sisters who entered the SSJ Community, that path began with teaching. Working with less fortunate students made her realize the importance of a family-based approach to education. She was the first executive director of Montague Catholic Social Ministries, which ultimately led her to pursue a doctorate in social work.

“The reward of working with students now is witnessing their growth. A good social work program, at its core, is the development of the whole person. I find I’m a sort of Velcro that attracts the students who are square pegs, who are NOT going to fit neatly in those round holes. Such situations are reconcilable, but you really have to roll up your sleeves to get through it. I get to watch them turn things around, and graduate, and work in the profession.”



SR. KIT (CENTER) IS SHOWN WITH SOME OF HER STUDENTS AT WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY.

“The tradition of the SSJs is this oral story of going into the city and seeing what the needs are. I feel I’ve had that opportunity, and it’s made a difference. It is life-giving, not only for ourselves, but for the people we are in contact with.”

SR. KIT HINGA

The Legacy Continues

Prison Ministry

A prison might not be the first place you’d look for a Catholic Sister, but six of our Sisters and one Agrégée are currently working in prison ministry.

Among them, until February, was Sister Julia Sullivan who worked at the Berkshire County Sheriff’s Office, Jail and House of Correction for 20 years. As Assistant Deputy Superintendent for Programs and Treatment, she supervised case management, education, mental health, substance abuse and reentry services for inmates.

“This work is not new to our congregation,” she says. “It is at the heart of our mission of building relationships with God and neighbor, as well as fostering justice where injustice exists.”

Her work focused on providing the various services inmates needed without judgment, trying to reverse the values and behaviors that led to the criminal activity that brought them to jail in the first place.



SR. JULIA TALKS TO A PRISONER AT THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY JAIL AND HOUSE OF CORRECTION.

“Most, if not all, of the population with whom I worked will someday return to their cities, towns and neighborhoods,” Sr. Julia says. “It is essential that this society provide services in our jails and prisons that will help insure their successful reentry to society.”

Sr. Ann Keefe 1952 - 2015

TRIBUTE



“The Sister of St. Joseph moves always to unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God...”

Sister Ann Cecilia Keefe sought always to be a neighbor, and find others willing to make new neighbors in order to help less fortunate neighborhoods. In 30 years of ministry at St Michael’s Parish in the inner city of Providence, Rhode Island, she became neighbor to parishioners, original Irish families as well as new immigrant families. Year after year she made new neighbors across the State, at city hall, union halls, with young struggling mothers or at-risk youth; they were all her community.

Ann knew lasting change occurs when people are lifted up together in friendship. She was not afraid of strident activism or strong language but she knew too, that it is often in the small moments, a shared joke, a cup of coffee or drink together at the end of a long and difficult meeting, that community was created. She just didn’t talk, she listened and was fond of saying, “Let’s have a conversation.”

As cancer took away her sight and prevented her from walking, the neighborhood came to her. It was not uncommon in the last days to arrive at her house to find it full of neighbors, from the newly elected Governor, the police chief, or an old friend from some campaign long won, or a room filled with balloons that had been marched down the street in a parade by the children from a school she helped create. She was to the end still in conversation about what needed to be done.

May we be inspired to make a few more neighbors.....



AMONG SR. ANN’S Legacies

FOUNDER:

Providence CityArts for Youth
Community Boating Center
(sailing for people of all incomes)
Open Doors (supporting the
formerly incarcerated)

CO-FOUNDER:

Institute for the Study and Practice
of Non-Violence

MEMBER / BOARD MEMBER:

National Association of Social Workers
MA Fordham Social Work/Policy Planning
Steering Committee, R.I. Interfaith Coalition
Providence Neighborhood Housing Corporation
AIDS Care Ocean State
Nonviolence Works, Inc.
Diocesan Office of Black Catholic Ministries
Providence Community Library Association
Delegate to National Black Catholic Congress

Those Who Live in
the Hearts of Others
Never Die*

Dearly departed
Benefactors and Sisters:

For your integrity,
extraordinary goodness and
many acts of kindness,
For your inspiration, generosity
and faithful guidance, and
for your simplicity of life,
enthusiastic spirit and
compassionate charity, and
for so much more,

We Remember You and
Give Thanks!

* THOMAS CAMBELL

Mark Your Calendar

THE 19TH ANNUAL
Sisters of Saint Joseph



GOLF CLASSIC

**TO BENEFIT THE CARE OF OUR
RETIRED SISTERS**

MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2015
SPRINGFIELD COUNTRY CLUB

Contact: Eleanor Harrington
golfclassic@ssjspringfield.com

Partners in Mission 2015

SSJ 500 Club

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FORWARD MOVING

The old adage *“God closed a door, but opened a window”* took on a literal meaning this past summer when 30 elderly Sisters of St. Joseph needed to move from their residence at the beloved Mont Marie motherhouse because of the impending sale of the property.



FROM TOP: SR. CAROL LAREAU HELPS SR. IRENE COMEAU UNPACK IN MILTON, SR. MARION DENISE SCANLAN IS GREETED BY A SISTER OF ST. JOSEPH OF BOSTON; SR. SIMONE RODRIGUES HELPS SR. MARILYN BELLO MOVE IN TO HER NEW RESIDENCE IN MILTON.



Milton & Framingham & Holyoke

As word of their plight spread, offers were made by other women’s religious congregations to welcome our Sisters into their residences. And so with a great deal of sadness, the Sisters said good-bye to their longtime home and moved to health care facilities in Milton and Framingham sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston and to a residence provided by the Daughters of the Heart of Mary in Holyoke.



We are happy to report that the relocated Sisters are thrilled with their new housing and have been welcomed with loving arms by their hosting communities.

The Congregation’s administrative offices also needed a new home, and again a generous offer was made – this time by the Springfield Diocese and the Mother Mary of Hope Parish. In early fall, the offices were set up in an unused parish building at 577 Carew Street in Springfield. The building is well suited to our needs and the neighborhood is familiar since several of our Sisters served here over the years.



So not one, but several windows have opened in our time of need and for that we are extremely grateful!



Carew St., Springfield



Witness

Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield

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