

Witness

Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield Magazine

Making Connections With The Dear Neighbor



Visiting Shurt-



Haiti Plunge



House of HOPE



SSJ Ministries
through the years

Gray House



Sheltering Wings

Witness

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WITH PRESENCE IN

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Rhode Island
Vermont

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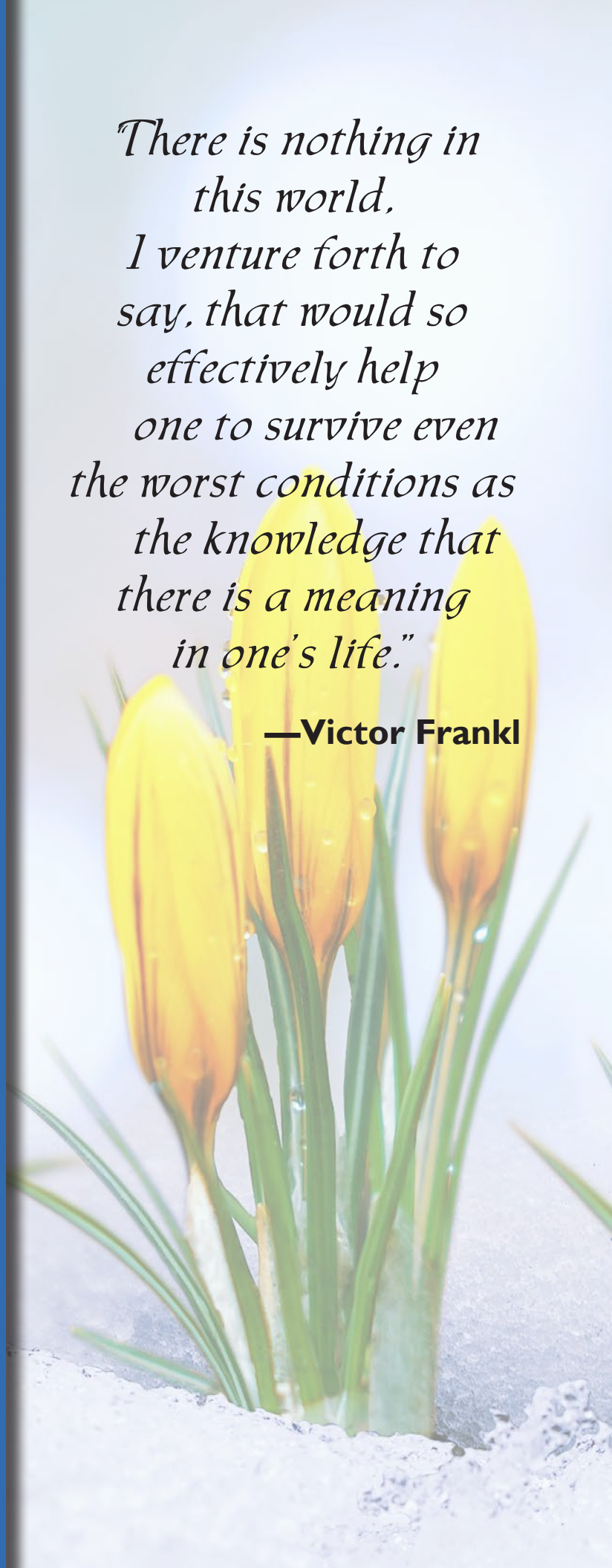
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On the Cover

Some of the many ministries the SSJs have supported through the years.

*There is nothing in
this world,
I venture forth to
say, that would so
effectively help
one to survive even
the worst conditions as
the knowledge that
there is a meaning
in one's life."*

—Victor Frankl



Dear Friends,



As I pondered thoughts for my message to each of you, I came across a quote from Viktor Frankl, just to the left of this note.

Since 2021, through even today, we have contended with the pandemic, may have experienced Covid, spent time in isolation and yet, carefully and graciously, welcomed the opportunity to return to our lifestyles. We have come to appreciate the meaning in our lives and the lives of others more compassionately and tenderly. And, it is a joyful occasion to reintroduce ourselves to you, our friends and supporters, in this edition of **Witness**, “Making Connections.”

While we were hunkered down, our connection to our “Dear Neighbor” continued to be realized, often in non-tangible ways, but our Sisters, Agrégées and Associates continued to respond to our mission to “unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God,” thus experiencing the continued meaning of life. This was certainly in imitation of our founding Sisters who frequently gathered to pray, divided the city and went out among the “Dear Neighbor” educating and teaching them skills in order that these women may develop meaning and purpose in their lives.

As you continue to read this edition of **Witness**, you will find stories from some members of our Congregation, many of whom are ministering at various distances, where countless aspects of poverty continue to flourish. Many of our Sisters, Agrégées and Associates continue to reach out to our local, and not so local agencies that have dedicated their mission to providing for the “Dear Neighbor.” Many of you have supported and continue to support those agencies that live our mission, namely, the Gray House, Homework House, Hope House of Education, Montague Social Ministries, Living in Freedom Together, and Sophia Academy, to name a few. And we are grateful!

Meaning in our lives is based on various aspects of faith, a faith in God, a faith in ourselves and faith in others. This is a faith that reinforces, strengthens, supports and encourages our commitments, informs our decision-making processes and shapes our destiny! This faith gives meaning to our lives, enables us to live an abundant life and provides a vision for the future! May we continue “Making Connections” with our “Dear Neighbor!”

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth (Betsy) Sullivan SSJ". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Sullivan, SSJ, President

Making Connections With The Dear Neighbor

Who is “The Dear Neighbor”? They live around the corner, and around the world! That’s where you’ll find the Sisters of St. Joseph as well. We were founded to discover and go where the need was greatest. We serve in schools and prisons; refugee camps and underserved communities. We protest war and advocate nonviolent means of peacemaking; we work with and for justice.

We asked a few members of our Congregation to describe some of the ministries they have been involved with during our decades of service. The work has been challenging, as you will read. But we SSJs meet each challenge joyfully, loving God and loving neighbor without distinction, as our charism dictates.



The House of Peace & Education, Inc. (HOPE)

Gardner, Massachusetts 1996—present

by **Maxyne D. Schneider, SSJ**

Co-founder, and former Executive Director

Vatican II and a “dreamers’ brunch” helped bring me to a deeply meaningful and unforgettable experience with and for the “dear neighbor.” The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) had called women and men religious throughout the world to revive the spirit of their founders, to internalize the message of the Gospels and to apply both to the “signs of the times.” In the early ‘90’s, in the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, our SSJ Leadership invited all who wished to come to a brunch to dream out-loud about how we could further do this. Several initiatives emerged, including what would become the House of Peace & Education, Inc. (HOPE) in the small former manufacturing city of Gardner in North Central Massachusetts. For so many Sisters across the U.S. this era was exhilarating, calling us to the best and deepest of our commitments.



The Gospels called all to love of neighbor, and our SSJ founders in mid-17th century France sought to serve God by serving the “dear neighbor.” They divided a city among them to find its unmet needs and then turned their hands to addressing those of which women were capable. This was what we four HOPE founders did in Greater Gardner, where our Sisters had served since the mid 1920’s. In the process, we would build a community of neighbors without whom HOPE could not have come into being.

We had a head start on this, as Srs. Helen Catherine Shine and Nancy Welsh had many friends, the result of their having ministered in Gardner for over 25 years, originally in the parochial school as principal and teacher. In more recent years, Sr. Helen had founded a thrift shop, serving more than material needs as she listened to the concerns of her customers. Sr. Nancy was a pastoral minister for two Catholic parishes, finding ways to address the needs of the disadvantaged, who often fell outside her official job description. She also brought deep connections with the ecumenical clergy of the region.

Sr. Mary Honnen and I moved to Gardner to join Srs. Helen and Nancy in community, where we would, in prayer and discussion, process what we had learned from our needs assessment. Sr. Mary Frances had experience in founding a non-profit organization in Appalachia, including skills in grant writing. I brought computer skills and a strong belief that education changes lives.

We conducted interviews with civic leaders in many sectors of the community, we analyzed census data, and, most especially, we engaged in volunteer work among those whom we wished to serve. (Nan and Mary volunteered three days a week for a year as court advocates with Battered Women’s Resources, Inc., for example.) We learned this: the loss of manufacturing jobs in the 80’s had profound economic and social impact. Not unlike other parts of the Northeast, violence was a major public health threat, as was economic

Making Connections

disparity. We wished to help prevent and help heal. Our programs for women, children and families would address these goals.

Sr. Mary was passionate about serving women with computer job-skill training. Some of those enrolled had experienced violence, others family illness or job downsizing. Most had children to support. Sr. Helen continued her ministry in the thrift shop. Sr. Nancy and I worked to establish the HOPE for Kids programs: holistic after-school support; group mentoring for the K-2 set, which often and in a fun-filled way served youngsters with social-skill needs; and the summer program, which included an hour of individual tutoring or enrichment, matched to the needs of the child. In each program it mattered that we had staff, paid or volunteer, with the skills to actually accomplish the program goals.

All the children's programs served food, and in the summer children could also learn some cooking skills, as some of them needed to make their own meals at home. Some of our Sisters joined local volunteers each summer. Every nook and cranny of our three-decker house and its yard became a site for programming. Not only program participants, but their families, too, became a part of the HOPE family of very dear neighbors.

In 2008 the last of us four founders left HOPE, having since our opening in the summer of 1996 established the organization, its programs, its board, its cadre of 200 volunteers, and its fundraising so that, as intended, it would become part of the Greater Gardner community. Working for HOPE's success was every sector of the civic community: schools, churches, financial institutions, businesses, the local newspaper and the City. We Sisters, I believe, had lived the intent of Vatican II's invitation. The dream voiced at a brunch a decade and a half before had been realized.

The other three founders have since died, but they, too, would surely take pride that the organization is still serving women and children, having provided computer access and two daily meals to children through the height of the pandemic, and having expanded the scope of the women's job readiness and training program. Now in larger quarters, HOPE has added a dress-for-success clothing shop and a café, open to the public and offering women in the program opportunities to learn customer service. Neighbors offering service and those receiving service are still united. For me, the experience of being a neighbor among them is one I regard as dear and will treasure all my life.



HOPE for Kids after-school: On some days I would help with homework, always an enjoyable time and part of an executive director's fun of "wearing many hats" in a young organization.

With The Dear Neighbor



Deirdre Griffin, SSJ and Maryknoll Lay Missioner, celebrating guest birthdays at Annunciation House migrant shelter on the U.S./Mexico border in El Paso, TX.

Annunciation House El Paso, Texas

by Deirdre Griffin, SSJ

"A comer! A comer!" I smile to hear Neri's voice in the hall calling our Casa Papa Francisco shelter community of forty-two guests and five volunteers to come to eat, to come to the table.

Our supper this evening is a simple soup made from the bones and meat left over from the chicken the women from Mexico prepared earlier this afternoon to feed an additional 117 people who recently arrived from Venezuela and are being sheltered at a nearby hotel. The Venezuelans do not have papers, so we will host an asylum application workshop for them tomorrow.

Heydi, from Guatemala, moves slowly down the hall ahead of me carrying her week old baby girl, to whom she gave birth in immigration custody only days before her 18th birthday, at which time she was released and came to us. She speaks the indigenous language K'iche', not Spanish, but understands Neri's warm invitation nonetheless. As we join hands in a circle to pray, six year old Gretel runs through the door and jumps into my arms. I can feel her little heart racing as she lingers for a hug after this first day of school in a new place; such courage following the harrowing journey from Honduras to El Paso, TX with her mother. We sway for a few moments as she gets her bearings and I marvel, yet again, to behold the radical hospitality of God to which I am called as a Sister of Saint Joseph - to offer it, to bear witness to it, and to allow it to transform into a more loving person.

As the child of Irish immigrant parents, it is my privilege to be here at the U.S./Mexico border to offer a warm welcome to people seeking safety through the Annunciation House shelter network. As an attorney, I am greatly distressed by the lack of legal services available to support asylum seekers in El Paso, and, as always, I am humbled by the gratitude expressed by our guests for the smallest of kindnesses. The immensity of the suffering would overwhelm me, were it not for the support of my Sisters of Saint Joseph community. Our shared prayer life and our commitment to the gospel call to walk with our dear neighbors at the margins of society empower me daily - to welcome and to advocate for those arriving each day.

Our short term volunteer, Jessi, takes the lead in welcoming our newly arrived guests. She affirms the sacred gift of each one in the circle, thanks our chefs, and invites someone to offer the blessing for the meal. Doña Herminia picks up the thread, "Gracias a Dios/thanks be to God..."

Passionist Volunteers

Jamaica, West Indies

by **Maureen Kervick, SSJ**

"I know nothing of tomorrow except that the love of God will rise before the Sun."

It is with these words by Saint John Vianney in my heart that I ventured to Jamaica, West Indies thirteen years ago. I was to be the Site Supervisor for the Passionist Volunteers, young adults who were beginning their year's commitment of service to families and churches of the rural poor of Jamaica.

What did the sunrise bring me? Who has been my neighbor? How has the neighbor challenged and sometimes confused me? How has the neighbor instructed and enlightened me? Mostly how has the neighbor delighted, encouraged, and reassured my heart? In reflecting over my years in Jamaica I can truly say that the neighbor has challenged and invited me into a new way of living. I have come to an enriched way of caring and marveling how different races, religions, and lifestyles reflect the mystery of God.

The PVI Volunteers came to walk with the wounded. They came with enthusiasm and commitment to personal growth and spiritual development. My role was to guide them gently yet firmly with a sense of consistency: patient listening, mentoring, reassuring them as they adjusted to the twists and turns of acculturation.

Making Connections



The Religious Women from Poland, Africa, United States, Cuba, who served in parish ministry, clinics, schools, homes for the lost and forgotten, welcomed me and mentored me through my own faltering adjustments. I am proud to refer to them as both my "Neighbor" and "my Sister".

The Volunteers from colleges and parishes from the states and Canada are the ones whom I have the privilege to host during their time of service as they share their talents and skills with the people in building houses, visiting schools and spending time with homebound people who are alone. Their dedication and selflessness along with their faith is such a reminder to me of all the good people in our world.

Who Are my Neighbors? All those who have touched my life in my various ministries here where I am surrounded by the beauty of the land, the richness of different cultures and the echoing of the people, as they say no matter what circumstances they face, "I am Blessed".

With The Dear Neighbor

Professor of Theology

Mount St. Mary's University

by Mary Kate Birge, SSJ

Recently, when someone asked me what I teach, in a moment of “puckishness” I replied, “Eighteen to twenty-two year olds.” In fact, I am an associate professor of theology at Mount St. Mary's University. But what, or better whom, I teach and minister to are eighteen to twenty-two year olds because they, and my colleagues who also minister to them through teaching and administering the university, are my “dear neighbors.”

I am also the only fulltime woman religious on the faculty. So, every semester, I teach undergraduates one or the other of two required courses “the Mount” demands all students take and pass in order to graduate, and every other year I am fortunate enough to teach a sequence of two courses to our few theology majors, Survey of Old Testament and New Testament, respectively.

Periodically, I also teach a course in the fall semester to first year students that is designed to introduce them to what they should expect as undergraduate students at this Catholic liberal arts university. It also serves them as a type of “home room” where they can ask questions of me about things that are unfamiliar or troublesome to them in this new adventure in education. So, in addition to serving these eighteen or so first year students as their homeroom teacher and guidance counselor, I also attempt to teach them the art of college-level analytical reading and writing. And there are even some days where I am successful at it!

I do all of the above (and sometimes a bit more as “coach” of the club field hockey team or a director of faculty “retreats-in-every-day-life”) because I love to share my passion for Scripture with others, even when they may not be quite as passionate about it as I am.

But mostly I do it because I love my students, especially the ones who do not know how to ask the questions about God and/or about finding meaning in life, yet are so hungry to discover answers to their unarticulated questions. During one-on-one time at office hours, when a student will come to ask a question about a grade or because I have written a “love note” to them on a less-than-stellar quiz or test that they must come talk with me about how I can help them avoid a repeat of that grade, I will discover what is really on this student's heart and mind. Then, I can hear the sorrow, the fear, the hope that resides in their heart and respond with words of kindness, support, perhaps advice if warranted, which may open the way for this student, the dear neighbor, to connect with God and with others who are in search of the same.



A prospective student gets the official Sister Mary Kate greeting!

Making Connections

Sheltering Wings Orphanage Burkina Faso, Africa

by Linda Wilk, SSJ



Sheltering Wings

One day you find yourself comfortably walking through life doing the work you have loved for forty-two years unaware of how drastically your life is about to change. Two thousand five was the year that put everything into motion for me when I received an invitation to travel to West Africa to deliver Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts to some of the poorest children in the world. We at St. Agnes School in Dalton, had embraced the project of filling shoeboxes for a few years when this invitation came. Accepting the invitation to deliver boxes in person was a logical next step. I had no idea of the impact this trip would have on me.

What a disappointment it was when we arrived and learned the boxes had not cleared immigration and we would not be able to distribute them. What

happened next touched me to my very core. Our group visited an orphanage founded by Ruth Cox. My experience there at that time and subsequent visits left me hearing God's call to walk alongside Ruth. I was reluctant to give up the comfort I knew for a life of uncertainty and challenge, but our God is a persistent God. Following much prayer and discernment I freed myself to accept the call.

Connections Day August 2013 provided time to come together with the Community of St. Joseph and pray for blessings for us all as we began a new year of service, "Uniting neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God." Almost ten years later, I still feel blessed to represent the Sisters of St. Joseph in many remote villages in West Africa.

Our work is varied. One of our first projects was to build a clinic and maternity hospital in the village we called home. Women no longer needed to travel 25 miles on the back of a motorcycle to give birth at a safe facility. Next, we built a secondary school in our village where classes previously ended in sixth grade. Our sponsorship program sends children to school and feeds families and widows. There are more than two hundred fifty children and forty widows being blessed. It is heart-warming to observe the hope on the faces of four of our non-hearing students as they enthusiastically participate in sewing

With The Dear Neighbor

classes knowing they will have the opportunity to provide a living for themselves. We are partnering with another nonprofit to build a training center for girls who have not succeeded in traditional school settings. This year twenty young women are enrolled in this residential vocational school where they will learn sewing, weaving, gardening and animal husbandry.

The Gospel is being preached in the twenty-five churches we have built in our region. We have rebuilt homes for widows and families whose mud brick houses have collapsed after the brutal downpours of the rainy season.

We have drilled and repaired more than thirty wells providing clean safe water to thousands. There is no greater sense of satisfaction than witnessing the joy on the faces of people who no longer need to walk miles each day for clean water.

We have been forced to move twice as terrorism encroaches in the region. Thanks to a faithful God and loyal national partners, our work continues to thrive despite the many challenges.

Thank you for all you have done to make this ministry a reality.



The Haiti Plunge

Haiti, The Caribbean

by Eunice Tassone, SSJ

The Haiti Plunge (HPI) was the brain child of Berkshire County youth in 1984 who had gathered at the Church Outreach to Youth (COTY) Youth Center in North Adams, MA for a presentation I was giving on the subject of Making A Difference in This World With Their Lives. I challenged them, as high school youth, to do something meaningful and productive that would bring about change in the world, instead of occupying space with little purpose. The Call to Jeremiah: 1:4-10 was the premise of the presentation because Jeremiah was about their age when God called him to be His spokesperson to the Israelites.

I was not prepared to receive my audience's response to this presentation. Usually, kids will politely listen then move on with their lives. This group of 120 students literally challenged me to help them make that difference. I had shown them a video of high school youth on a mission trip to Haiti so they also had a visual image that promoted their response. Since I was not prepared to respond to their challenge at that time I told them to think about what they were asking of me and if they really felt called to do a mission trip to Haiti, meet me the following Sunday to continue this discussion. I thought that would be the end of it. That they would lose interest and I would be off the hook.

The following Sunday I returned to the COTY Center thinking it would be a one and done deal only to find twenty-five students waiting for me. Thus, the saga of The Haiti Plunge emerged.

Following that group meeting I consulted with Canadian friends that I was missioned with in Labrador and who were now in Haiti, to see if I could make this happen for these students. I wanted to engage these young adults in sustainable development in the Haitian bush so that they could see the struggles of a developing country. I had spent many years in Black Tickle, Labrador, a small isolated coastal village, working with native populations in sustainable development. I wanted this to be a cross-cultural, educational, experiential learning experience. This was to be a reality check for the students, on how two-thirds of the world's population live.

In the summer of 1984 the first group of nine students took the plunge and spent three weeks working in the Haitian bush. They stayed in tents because there were no buildings to house them. They had no running water or electricity. Their project was to cap a mountain spring that would provide a clean water supply for the four surrounding villages. The task was extremely challenging. Because of the afternoon heat, they had to work from 6:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and return to the project site for the 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. shift. The more challenging we made it the more they embraced it. Haitian kids worked along side them and they found creative ways to overcome the language barriers. I did not realize at the time, how committed these young people would be to Haiti until we returned home. Once they began to tell their story I realized that this was not the end but the beginning of an experience that would change all our lives. That first team has grown into the eight high school and college teams that participate annually in the Haiti Plunge. They have more than fulfilled the challenge to make a difference in this world. Forty thousand inhabitants of nine mountain villages will attest to that.

Making Connections



With The Dear Neighbor

The organization has expanded from the Berkshires to a national platform. What was not part of the original plan of keeping it a Berkshire entity was dissolved when high school students went off to college and shared their experiences with friends. Many students continued going to Haiti throughout their college breaks and invited their friends to join them. Thus the expansion to a national platform. Haitian and American youth together continue working to attain the goal of helping nine villages reach the level of self-sustainability. They have built the physical infrastructures that support this objective. Each village now boasts of a school and church. The village of Desab has a health clinic and bakery which is available to all people living in the area. Roads have been built and rebuilt multiple times as a result of the tropical storms. Reforestation and erosion controls are in the beginning stages. Only 2% of the Haiti mountainside has forest cover. As soon as the teams can return to Haiti safely, a new women's center and grain storage facility will be built. A micro-loan program for women to start small businesses in their villages will be introduced.

Haiti's tragedy at the moment is the civil unrest. Ninety gangs are ravaging the country. There is no government to provide any services for the people. Haiti is on the brink of famine. However, HPI is proud of their Haitian staff and their leadership. HPI, because of its donor base, provided the financial resources to gift the children during the holidays with two special meals. At Christmas they received a rare meal of rice and beans and on New Year's (also the day they celebrate their independence) the traditional bowl of Pumpkin Soup. For children who eat sporadically this was the greatest of gifts.



Introducing Haitian kids to s'mores!



Preparing for dinner.

Making a difference takes vision, time, commitment, and many forms. The students who believed that they could make a difference in one small part of the world continue to do so as adults. They have become central to the HPI donor base. Without that support the HPI would cease to exist. They have also become doctors, nurses, engineers, contractors, artists and so many other services and professions that were influenced by this program. Many served in the Peace Corps, Partners in Health, Doctors Without Borders and other mission organizations. HPI has also been the spin-off of three other non-profits started by former team members, who continue to work in Haiti.

Making Connections

Kakuma Refugee Camp

Kenya, Africa

by Dorothy Pilkington, SSJ

Today I am honored and humbled to share a small piece of my ministry in Kakuma, Kenya with Jesuit Refugee Services. When we look at an African map, it is rare to see the word Kakuma. It is a small town in the northeastern corner of Kenya, located in the desert. The desert is a place where we are led beyond any human signposts and connections, a place that leaves us exposed before God. It is both harsh and beautiful!

When Jesuit Refugee Services assigned me to this camp to oversee their social service projects in 1997, there were approximately 97,000 refugees stuffed together in 5 kilometers of sand. Most refugees were from Sudan, Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Uganda & Eritrea. All were survivors of vicious civil wars. These people have seen people killed or dying of starvation who in many cases were forced to abandon helpless relatives, friends and companions as they fled the fighting. In these countries, the refugees saw no signs of the civil war ending. A significant part of the increased number of refugees consisted of women and young girls.

As I talked with the women from ethnic communities and questioned “why” they fled their homeland, some responses were: the outbreak of war in their neighborhoods, political and religious persecutions, forced marriages, wives following their husbands to safety, tribal hatred, violence, gender violence, sexual harassment by rebels, denial of an education for girls, cultural inhibitions, e.g. women are voiceless in many African societies.

After a few months in Kakuma Camp, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Social Service Director requested that I have an outreach to women, especially the Somalis. This request was accepted as I met with these women and eventually every Tuesday afternoon was our time together. As I pondered “What do we have in common”, I prayed, reflected and decided to start with the Old Testament women. How pleased these women were to share their customs, prayer and services with me. After a few months, I was invited to their Special Days of Worship! How surprised I was when their leader of worship called me forth – I was wrapped in cloth like a Somali woman! What a great sign of acceptance!



Poetry was a special time for refugee women of various ethnic groups to write and to share their feelings. An example is:

*Life can lose its meaning
When mother is gone.
Life becomes harder when
war is all around you
The family flees as there is no
hope back home,
Now is Kakuma, nowhere to
go.*

With The Dear Neighbor

In Kakuma Refugee Camp, healthcare, monthly food rations, education at all levels became available as well as Jesuit Refugee Services' Social Services Counseling Centers and a program for the mentally and physically challenged. The last two programs were also part of my responsibilities. My JRS staff met regularly for workshops to assist them in guiding their ethnic groups who had faced unbelievable hardships in their countries and traveling to the Camp.

Before I left JRS in Kakuma in 2002, I requested from Jesuit Refugee Services and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to have a shelter built for young girls who had nowhere to go! Frequently I was called by UNHCR Security during the night when a young woman was running away from a dangerous situation. Most of the time she needed to stay with UNHCR security or jail. If there was a shelter built at one of our JRS Counseling Centers (we had 24 hour security), this may be a safe haven for them. It had room for twelve beds for these young women or moms who needed protection for unhealthy and dangerous relationships. How grateful I will always be as this was a clear sign to STOP THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!



Sr. Dorothy Pilkington and friend.

It was difficult for me to leave Jesuit Refugee Services in Kakuma, but they had another assignment waiting for me in Uganda where rebels had attacked the area.

My final sharing was written by a JRS Social worker:

*Let there be peace in Africa
We have to transform the mentality
And dismantle the structures that
Generate oppression of people.
Let there be peace in Africa
Our beloved continent.
Our ancestor's land. Amen.*

Thank you for gifting me with your caring presence and listening to a small piece of my Jesuit Refugee Service story. How blest I am!



Making Connections: The Dear Neighbor Fund

by Sr. Denise Granger, SSJ

Here's a question for you: Where were you when you had an Aha! moment? Taking a walk perhaps? Contemplating the ocean? On retreat? Maybe a combination of circumstances?

The idea to create the **Dear Neighbor Fund** falls in the latter category.

After years of listening to National Public Radio's suggestion that their fundraising would stabilize if listeners became sustainers, I thought well, there's a great idea. Also contributing to the idea was the fact that at community meetings we would often take up a collection for a worthy cause or an emergency. Did that work? Yes it did, but it was cumbersome and other needs were missed.

The Dear Neighbor Fund, introduced in 2016, offered the opportunity for sisters, agreees, associates, and as time went on, others to donate to a pool of money. The Dear Neighbor Fund has donated over \$75,000 to projects and organizations created by members of the Congregation, where members of the Community of St. Joseph serve and to respond quickly to needs of our sisters and brothers as near as the Springfield area and as far as Haiti, Jamaica, and Burkina Faso. On a regular annual rotation, donations, usually \$700, are sent. The donation is free of restrictions and is used to address the needs of those served by the organizations. Responses to emergencies vary in amounts depending on the need and what is in the Fund.

It actually works quite well and offers the Office of Justice and Peace, and therefore the Congregation, the opportunity to stay connected and partner with groups that have historic ties to us by their origin or whose purpose is, like ours, to "unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God without distinction". From kids in Holyoke who need a warm jacket, our neighbors who rely on soup kitchens, incarcerated women, young learners in after school programs, women getting job training, water projects in Haiti and Burkina Faso, and many others, the Dear Neighbor Fund touches the "dear neighbor" in real and timely ways.

In the name of all those who are the face of God for us, the Justice and Peace Office offers profound thanks for the generosity of those who have donated over the last seven years. So, the next time you wonder whether an idea might work – it just might!

Regular Recipients of the DNF

Jericho

Burkina Faso

The Gray House

Incarcerated women

Haiti Plunge

House of Peace and Education

Homework House

Jamaica

Montague Catholic Social

Ministries

Elms College Campus Ministry

Sophia Academy

Change for Global Change

Others the DNF has responded to (not a complete list)

Jewish Family Services (Afghan refugee children)

Lorraine's Soup Kitchen

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

St. Michael's Cathedral Outreach

After school program and clothing room in Worcester

Food Bank of Western Mass

Providence Ministries

Abby's House

From the Director of Development

Mary Ferguson, SSJ

Dear Friends,



The Sisters of St. Joseph and the Development Team are delighted to once again be offering our Witness newsletter. We are taking this opportunity to reintroduce ourselves and to express our gratitude to you, our faithful donors, as you share your prayers and your gifts.

Our Development Team consists of four full-time members and many wonderful volunteers.

Sr. Constance Quinlan, who served as Development Director from 1999 to 2011, remains very busy managing our 500 Club and Memorial Donations.

Amy, who has been with us since 1995, is our database “guru”, inputting donations, responding to inquiries, and helping, with great patience, those among us who are sometimes challenged by the mysteries, or idiosyncrasies, of the computer.

Sr. Eleanor Harrington who joined us in 2012, is our Coordinator of Special Events, serving as chairperson of our annual August Golf Tournament, and pre Covid events such as our Irish Gala, which we hope will return next year. On a daily basis, Sr. Elly works with our Business Reply Mail from you, our generous donors.

We are blessed with the assistance of several Sisters who volunteer both time and energy writing Thank You notes, preparing materials for the 500 Club, and performing other tasks “as requested”.

It is our usual practice to mail five times a year: our Lent/St. Joseph Appeal in late February, spring newsletter Witness in early May, Summer Appeal in late June, Fall Appeal in early September, and Holiday Appeal, encompassing Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas. We also have many donors who choose to donate monthly.

It is the generosity of you, our faithful donors, as you share your prayers and your gifts, that makes this ministry successful. As always, you and your intentions are remembered in the daily prayers of our Sisters. God bless you always.

With deep gratitude,

Mary Ferguson SSJ

Sr. Mary Ferguson, SSJ

In Memoriam

2021—2023



Sr. Mary Rose Lyons
(Raymond Maria)
April 1, 2021



Sr. Mary Lou Gillon
(James Regina)
October 20, 2021



Sr. Eileen Joseph Christopher
(Beverly)
November 1, 2021



Sr. Mary T. Quinn
November 14, 2021



Sr. Anna Marie Kane
(Christina James)
April 29, 2022



Sr. Teresa Moran
(Francis Anna)
January 11, 2022



Sr. Mary Gallagher
(James Irene)
June 18, 2022



Sr. Frances Gloster
(Joan Catherine)
June 24, 2022



Sr. Alice Kenney
(James Martin)
June 29, 2022



Sr. Lucille Bertrand
(Marie du Bon Pasteur)
July 13, 2022



Sr. Elizabeth Scanlan
(Jean Elizabeth)
July 19, 2022



Sr. Patricia James Sweeney
(Ellen)
September 1, 2022



Sr. Ann Lynch
(Alice Edmond)
October 11, 2022



Sr. Frances Barry
(Philip John)
October 28, 2022



Sr. Claudette Samson
(Lucille Marie)
February 4, 2023



Sr. Patricia Johnson
(David Robert)
January 28, 2023



Sr. Angela Deady
(Robert Christopher)
December 30, 2022



Sr. Edith McAlice
(Marian Leo)
November 24, 2022



Sr. Catherine Hayes
(Catherine Edmund)
February 4, 2023



Sr. Arlene Kalin
(Walter Madeline)
February 22, 2023

Loving God,
in You, the past, the present and
the future are interwoven. Help us
to believe in the mystery of life.
Nourish us with truth until richly
fed, we reflect the glory of the
resurrection here and now in our
own lives.

Amen

Sherry Enserro Retires; Welcome Stacey DiFazio!

A former teacher in the Diocese of Springfield, Sherry Enserro became an SSJ Associate in 1996, and an Agrégée in 2008. During the process of becoming an Agrégée, Sherry heard of the need for a new SSJ Archivist. When she inquired about the job, she was referred to then-President Sr. Mary Quinn.

“Sr. Mary said ‘I’ll send you to a workshop in Pennsylvania. If you think you can do it at the end of the week, let me know, and we’ll give it a go.’”

That “give it a go” lasted over thirteen years. Sherry retired as SSJ Archivist in September, but still volunteers several times a week at her old haunt.

“By the afternoon of the first day of that workshop, I thought ‘This could really be fun!’” Sherry said, laughing. “Because it involves sorting!”

“Sorting”, it turns out, was but one of Sherry’s tasks. Her biggest mandate from Sr. Mary was the need to digitize the Archives—to convert thousands of documents and photos into digital files, so they could be more easily.... sorted.

“I don’t think she really had a clue what she was asking me to do,” Sherry admitted. “In my first year I went to a workshop on digitization. Of course, they were trying to sell their service. It took me about forty-five minutes to get my courage up. I raised my hand and said, ‘Let’s see if I understand this correctly. If I have a sheet of paper, and I scan it into my computer, this document is now digital?’ They said yes. And I thought, ‘Oh, thank you very much—that just saved me several thousand dollars!’



Stacey DiFazio, seated, with Sherry Enserro, surrounded by their work.

“After thirteen years, I feel like I’ve carried the Archives from what it was like back then to be ready for someone like Stacey, who is a lot more knowledgeable about things than I am.”

“Stacey” is Stacey DiFazio, a professional librarian and archivist for thirty years. She’s worked in public libraries, law libraries, hospital libraries and governmental libraries, both here in the United States as well as in Australia.

“My goal—as Sherry did in her time, is to try to bring it forward,” Stacey said. “There’s so much history here, and these women have done so much work. So much GOOD work! They taught all these kids. They’ve done all this social justice work in the community. It’s a privilege, really—to be a temporary custodian of all this history.”

“I’ve loved the work—loved getting to know the history of the Congregation,” Sherry added. “The job to me has been very spiritual. Sitting in that chair, with all the files of the deceased Sisters next to me, being fully aware: there is the history. As a Catholic, I’ve always been a firm believer in the Communion of Saints. They’re really present here.”



SSJ Golf Tournament

Monday, August 29, 2022



Save the Date!

Next SSJ Golf Tournament
August 28, 2023



SSJ 500 CLUB

please cut at dotted line

For safe, quick, and easy online registration, visit ssjspringfield.org, or fill out the form below and mail in.

SSJ 500 Club Checks payable to: Sisters of St. Joseph

☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly

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☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Credit Card #

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Phone (____) _____

Email _____

500 CLUB

Sisters of St. Joseph
OF SPRINGFIELD

Monthly drawings for each group of 500 members!

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2nd Prize: \$200

3rd Prize: \$100

Yearly membership: \$100 up front or \$10/month

First drawing September 21, 2023

SSJ 500 Club

c/o Development Office

577 Carew Street • Springfield, MA 01104

(413) 536-0853 • development@ssjspringfield.com

ssjspringfield.org

News 'n' Notes

Several Sisters of St. Joseph were recognized for their varied contributions to different organizations or for outstanding work in their field. We are highlighting a few of them and offer congratulations!



Sr. Melinda Pellerin was voted Vice President of the National Black Sisters Conference last July. We are proud to have one of our sisters hold a position on a national level.

Sr. Peggy Crowley was posthumously remembered for her legacy at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart parish in Springfield, MA with a shrine to St. Joseph the Worker in front of the pastoral center.



Sr. Maureen Kervick received an Honorary Degree from Elms College, Chicopee, MA on May 14, 2022. Sr. Maureen's career included a variety of ministries: Healthcare for the Homeless, Dean of Students at Elms College, nursing instructor at Springfield College, Vice President of Sisters of St. Joseph, Passionist Volunteers' Program staff in Jamaica to name a few.

Sr. Eileen Sullivan received the St. Thomas More Society Medal on October 2, 2022 for her many years of service as Spiritual Advisor to this society consisting of lawyers, judges and other legal associates.





The School of Continuing Education at the Elms College, Chicopee, is being named in honor of **Sr. Kathleen Kirley** who, in 1977, through her dedication and initiative, established evening classes and weekend educational programs specifically for students who could not attend the Elms College on a daily basis.

Sr. Jane Morrissey received the Pax Christi Ambassador of Peace award on Aug. 7, 2022 at the conclusion of Pax Christi USA's 50th Anniversary Celebration. Sr. Jane was honored for being a witness to Gospel nonviolence and an Ambassador of Peace.



Sr. Patricia Hottin received the Reader Raves Award on October 19, 2022 for Best Principal. Readers of MassLive and The Republican vote for their favorite individual, group or business in a variety of categories.

Sr. Kathleen Keating was presented the Polish Heritage Award by the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning. Sister Kathleen, president emerita of Elms College, was instrumental in establishing the center on the Elms campus more than 20 years ago.



Sr. Joan Magnani was honored for her years of service over decades at Jericho's 50th Anniversary Celebration on September 16, 2022



In some of the articles in this edition of *Witness*, the term **Community of St. Joseph** is referenced. The Community of St. Joseph includes vowed members, Associates, Agrégées and Partners in Mission. For more information, go to www.ssjspringfield.org, and open "Join Our Community."



From the top: well-wishers join Sr. Therese L'Heureux on her 95th birthday; the Worcester crew meet for lunch; Vermont Sisters celebrate St. Joseph's Day. Right: At our Transfer of Leadership last July, the SSJs bid a grateful farewell to the



outgoing Leadership Team--Sr. Angela Deady, Vice President, Sr. Joan Ryzewicz, President, and Sr. Pat Smith and Sr. Shirley Campbell. Far right: Our incoming Leadership Team--Sr. Denise Granger and Sr. Eileen Sullivan, Sr. Patricia McDonnell, Vice President, and Sr. Elizabeth Sullivan, President.



Find a Sister: ssjspringfield.org/contactus/findasister/

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