

# V O I C E S

A publication of the  
SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF LEAVENWORTH

## of Charity

SPRING 2008



**Mount St. Vincent Home  
celebrates 125th anniversary**

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**Heart of the Matter** VISION PROPELS ANNUNCIATION SCHOOL . . . . . PAGE 16

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF LEAVENWORTH  
2004 - 2010 DIRECTION STATEMENT

We, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth,  
who love the poor,  
hear a cry and feel an urgency in these times  
to unite our voices and to speak out,  
to live and move as women of hope.

Charged by the spirit born in us of Vincent, Louise and Xavier,  
and strengthened by our life together in community,  
we step into our future with a renewed sense of mission.

As women called to risk for the reign of God,  
we choose to nurture relationships of hope:

***with one another***

by creating authentic communities that welcome,  
support and challenge  
by strengthening our South-North connections  
by clarifying and enriching the SCLA-SCL relationship

***between leadership and membership***

by developing community structures that lead to more  
participation, collaboration and accountability  
by learning about our community's sponsoring role  
and works

***with the Church***

by sustaining dialogue with and by caring for the Church  
by engaging in theological reflection and study among  
ourselves and with our neighbors

***with the global community***

by responding to human and environmental issues  
through personal choices and communal actions  
by joining our voice with justice-centered organizations

***with the earth***

by embracing our need for full communion with all creation.

As a community of believers, we open ourselves  
to the presence of the Sacred in each of these relationships.

As Sisters of Charity, rooted in Christ and united in our convictions,  
we claim our responsibility as gospel-centered women  
and stand with all who suffer, who grieve, who hope.



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SCL 150TH JUBILEE YEAR

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COVER PHOTO: Three students in the Sister Daniel Stefani School at Mount St. Vincent Home display the Mardi Gras masks they designed this year.

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## from the Community Director



Sister Joan Sue Miller

From Kansas to Peru, California to Montana, points east, west, north and south, what a wonderful Year of Jubilee we have celebrated to date! And there is still more to come, more to share and more to unfold.

Mother Xavier was wise when she suggested that we “pause, to look back and see by what straight or twisting paths we have arrived at the place we find ourselves.” The 150th Jubilee observance has provided abundant opportunities to do just that. The days have been filled with storytelling – about Mother Xavier’s life and legacy, about the pioneer SCLs, about the Irish sisters, about our ministries and more.

It has been heartwarming to have so many people gather to celebrate with us. We deeply appreciate the prayers, the hospitality and the outpouring of gratitude. This truly is a time of jubilee, a time to acknowledge 150 years of blessings.

As we say in our jubilee theme – *From founding to future* – it is also a time to anticipate what lies ahead. We look forward to the special opportunity to do that as SCLs, Associates and former sisters gather in early July for a grand celebration on the Mother House campus. Sister Regina Bechtle, a Sister of Charity of New York and our featured speaker, will offer her reflections and wisdom as she encourages and challenges us to shape our future in gratitude, joy and hope.

We know that we are aging and that we are fewer in numbers. Yet vibrancy of spirit and hearty optimism characterize our ministries and the lives of our sisters of all ages. We are experiencing an increase in the number of our Associates who share deeply in our Mission and who are walking into the future with us. We recognize that charism is a gift that manifests itself as the work of the Spirit in a given time and place and yet transcends all time and places.

Perhaps that is what Vincent de Paul had in mind when he said that “grace has its moments.” We have known 150 years worth of those moments as the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Enlightened by our past, spirited by our charism and God willing, we will go forth to embrace a future full of hope and many graces yet to come.

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Joan Sue Miller". The script is fluid and cursive.

Sister Joan Sue Miller  
Community Director



# Former Mount St. Vincent residents say 'thanks' by volunteering

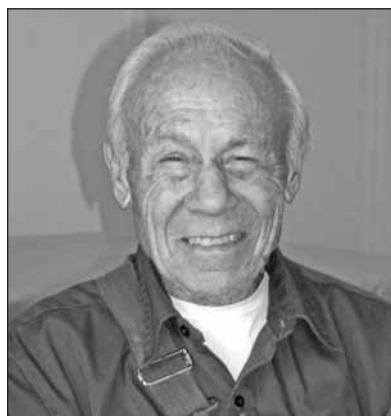
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Ray Johnson



Joe Nelson



Pete Zarlengo

While life has taken them different directions, Ray Johnson, Joe Nelson and Pete Zarlengo share three important things in common. Each spent part of his childhood in the orphanage of Mount St. Vincent Home (MSV), Denver, Colo. Many years later, each man volunteers at today's Home. Finally, Ray, Joe and Pete each treasure and value the difference MSV has made in their lives.

Pete arrived at MSV in 1927 following his mother's death. He was only two years old when he came to the Home with his brother and lived there until 1938. Pete went on to serve in the military, worked a while at the North Pole and spent most of his life operating an electrical/plumbing/heating business. Over the years, he has also spent a good portion of his time at MSV. In his 53rd year as a volunteer, Pete said, "I came back because I never forgot the Home."

Following his mother's death in 1938, his aunt brought Ray, his brother and their dog to MSV. Ray graduated from high school while a resident at the Home. In subsequent years, he served in the military and then taught music, math, literature and science in the Denver public schools. When Ray retired in 1992, Sister Lavonne Guidoni, who was development director at the Home, tapped him as a volunteer.

In looking back on his experience as a child and adolescent, Ray recognizes the significance of what he received at MSV. "You didn't get a lot of what you wanted," he recalled, "but you got a lot of what you needed." In the list of needs, Ray identified a religious perspective, a focus and an anchor for life.

Joe's dad died when he was 8. His mother took him and his brothers to Missouri to stay with her sister and brother-in-law for a while. She then brought the children with her to Colorado where, off and on, for three years (1927 to 1929), Joe stayed at MSV.

As an adult, Joe coached at MSV, serving at one time as Ray's baseball coach. Joe spent his career as a traveling salesman. His travels have kept him returning to MSV. He became acquainted with Sister Daniel Stefani, former executive director, and like Pete and Ray, Joe has remained involved with MSV.

When the three men lived at MSV, all of the staff members were sisters except the farmer and the maintenance man. "There wasn't anything that you did, that you didn't pray for or about," Ray remembered. "Faith was the greatest gift we received."

Because of what they gained at MSV as young orphans, the three men feel compelled to give back by volunteering. They paint, do yard work, help in the development office, hang doors – whatever is needed. Each considers his time spent as a volunteer a gift in return for the life given him at MSV.

*From its beginning as an orphanage in 1883 to its current role as a therapeutic residential and day treatment facility, Mount St. Vincent Home has been an outstanding, living example of the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, the love of Mother Xavier Ross for orphans and the responsiveness to need by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.*

## Home embodies Vincentian spirit;

Over the past 125 years, Mount St. Vincent (MSV) has welcomed over 18,000 children who had no place to turn for parenting, direction, counseling and intervention. The “orphans” of years gone by have been replaced in recent years by children with mental health diagnoses.

Sister Amy Willcott, executive director, said, “Most have experienced violence in their lives – often in the form of abuse – and as a result, they face complicated and serious problems with fewer options available for services for them and their families.”

### SCLs at MSV

- ▶ Sister Elizabeth Adams, educational mental health worker
- ▶ Sister Michael Delores Allegri, director, Aspen House
- ▶ Sister Roberta Furey, volunteer to the clinical director and sacristan
- ▶ Sister Marie Michael Mollis, mission coordinator
- ▶ Sister Amy Willcott, executive director



▲ Sister Amy Willcott admires a student's creativity.

### Expansive services

The Home's goal is to provide a continuum of support services and ultimately find a permanent stable home for each child. Accomplishing that goal is a journey of many incremental steps, different for each child with the common denominator of helping heal hurting minds and hearts.

At the present time, 100 children each day are receiving services through MSV. The Home offers a range of extensive and innovative programs for these children, including:

- ▶ Therapeutic residential care for up to 44 children, ages 5 to 12, whose emotional and behavioral problems are so severe that they cannot remain in their family homes or in foster care. The structured environment of three residential cottages serves as home for up to 36 children who attend classes at MSV. Aspen House can accommodate eight additional

“I have been working on my personal issues...  
I don't get angry as much. I take my time and  
cool myself down.”

— A.J., 11 years old  
MSV resident



◀ Sister Daniel Stefani School

# marks 125th anniversary

youth who have “graduated” from the cottages and attend community schools. Some are awaiting foster placement and some may live in Aspen House until age 18. They benefit from staff support and supervision in a more independent living environment.

- Day treatment including schooling and therapy for 3 to 12 year olds with the goal that the children return to their home schools and communities as soon as possible.

*continued on page 6*



▲ A.J. checks his homework with Sister Michael Delores Allegri.

## 125 YEARS: A PLACE WITH A HEART

<b>1882</b>	Bishop Joseph Machebeuf asked Mother Xavier Ross to build an orphanage in Denver and provided land for the Home.
<b>Feb. 15, 1883</b>	St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum opened; 50 children in residence by the end of the week.
<b>1886</b>	St. Vincent's Orphanage Aid Society formed.
<b>March 15, 1902</b>	Fire destroyed all but one of the buildings.
<b>December 1903</b>	New orphanage opened.
<b>1909</b>	St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum became Mount St. Vincent Home for boys as community needs changed.
<b>1917</b>	Crowded conditions led to development of Holy Child Nursery for infants in a separate facility.
<b>1919</b>	Land donated that included an orchard.
<b>1929-1940</b>	Sisters responded to needs for shelter, food and education during the Great Depression.
<b>1957-1958</b>	MSV underwent major construction with building of a new dormitory, play rooms, library, gym and swimming pool.
<b>1964</b>	Space added for preschoolers.
<b>1969</b>	MSV transitioned to a residential treatment center.
<b>1982</b>	Home underwent a \$1 million renovation.
<b>1993</b>	Pope John Paul II visited MSV. Guild of Mount St. Vincent formed; carries on tradition of the Aid Society.
<b>2000</b>	Three residential cottages opened.
<b>2004</b>	MSV began outpatient counseling program.
<b>August 2004</b>	Sister Daniel Stefani School opened.
<b>September 2006</b>	Second floor of the main building renovated to serve as Aspen House.

- ▶ The Sister Daniel Stefani School offering a K-8 program focused on each child's academic, emotional, behavioral and developmental strengths; residential and day treatment youth attend the school.
- ▶ Mount St. Vincent Preschool and Day Care combining traditional and therapeutic programs.
- ▶ Parental support programs, training and classes to develop child care skills and address child development issues.
- ▶ Individual, group, family and recreational therapy provided throughout various programs.



▲ Kristen Kumangai reads to pre-schoolers at Mount St. Vincent.

### Dedicated staff, volunteers

"We have a team of highly dedicated and skilled staff serving the needs of the youth," Sister Amy said. "Because of the intensity of the work, turnover can be a challenge. We have introduced training and an employee assistance program to address stress levels staff experience."

Funding remains a constant concern for the Home. The development office, a very active Development Council, the Guild and a loyal group of donors and friends support MSV through special events, fund raising and grants. The Home has an active and dedicated board of directors. Other persons volunteer their time and talents to benefit the Home by performing jobs like painting, stuffing envelopes and reading to the children.

"The heart of our work at Mount St. Vincent is, and always has been, the children," Sister Amy said. "It remains our mission to help them understand that they are loved, they are good and that they can do anything they set their minds to, now and when they grow up."

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**"We're here for the kids."**

— Graig Bears, member  
MSV Development Council

## Sponsored Ministries



▲ Sister Roberta Furey in the chapel at Mount St. Vincent.

## 38 years of dedicated service at MSV

**MISSIONED TO TEACH** at Mount St. Vincent Home in 1956, Sister Roberta Furey has spent a total of 38 years on three different assignments at the Denver facility. She has seen many changes during that time in her roles as teacher, child care worker, house mother and now as volunteer. Through it all, Sister Roberta has retained her love and devotion to the children.

While she started as a teacher, Sister Roberta quickly (after six months) transitioned into direct child care. She provided those services for 30 years. In more recent years, she helped in the kitchen and the front office. Two years ago after some major health concerns, Sister Roberta became a volunteer helping the clinical director and serving as sacristan.

In her 38 years at MSV, Sister Roberta has witnessed changes that included the transition from orphanage to residential care center and the admission of girls to the Home. She was there when Pope John Paul II visited MSV in August 1993. She thinks that the youth receiving MSV services today appear to be more disturbed than the children of years gone by – somewhat "the way the world is," Sister Roberta observed.

She comes to the Home each day for Mass and then greets the children as they arrive for classes. After that, Sister Roberta completes her volunteer assignments.

"As long as there is something I can do," she said, "I will stay here."





## SCLA's talents matched with needs of youth

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*Megan Blalock, massage therapist and artist, came to Mount St. Vincent Home to teach pottery. She fell in love with the kids and with the mission and has been able to use her diverse talents to the benefit of both the youth and the staff.*

“Kids have a hard time  
finding words to express  
how they feel.

With pottery, they can  
express it wordlessly.”

Megan and her husband Steve recently became SCLAs, sponsored by Sister Roberta Furey. “I feel really good about being an Associate,” Megan said. “What the sisters stand for aligns with my beliefs; it is very right and very comfortable for me.”

Megan has volunteered at the Home for the past seven and a half years. As a clinical therapist, she has used art therapy and massage therapy through a grant-funded program at MSV for the past three and a half years. Children are admitted into Megan’s program at their request. Her goal is to get the children – many of whom have been abused – to be accepting of touch and to be friends with their bodies following traumatic experiences.

She teaches pottery to all units and finds this to be a very therapeutic experience for the youth. “It’s very calming and a wonderful outlet,” she explained. “Kids have a hard time finding words to express how they feel. With pottery, they can express it wordlessly.”

Megan provides chair massages for staff on a volunteer basis – a much appreciated relaxing experience during stressful days and weeks. To learn more about Megan and her work, visit her website, <http://healinghumanity.net>.

“I feel really blessed to be able to do the work I do at the Home,” Megan said. She called Steve “her volunteer” who helps with different projects and who completely supports her commitment to MSV.

# Praying with the History

## continues through Jubilee Year

Across the country, small groups continue to gather for discussion and reflection using *Praying with the History* booklets prepared by a task force of Kansas City area sisters and SCLAs. The booklets cover distinct periods of SCL history and include prayers and discussion questions.

Session One covers 1581 to 1868 – the origins of the SCLs dating back to Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Terri Mauton, Sister Irene McGrath, Mary Rau, Sister Sharon Smith and Sandra Hick authored this booklet.

Session Two covers the period of 1870 to 1920 – a time of expanding ministries and new locations for the SCLs. Therese Horvat, Mary Rau, Joyce Rauth-Fears and Sister Patricia Sullivan wrote this copy.

Session Three picks up on the expanding ministries theme for the years 1920 to 1970 as written by Kitty and Len Bronec, Sister Ann Marita Loosen and Sister Barbara Wieseler.

Sister Melissa Camardo, Sister Lillian Maguire, Mary Rau and Ed Simons have

written the Session Four booklet that focuses on 1970 to the future.

“While the booklets were written for the Jubilee Year,” said Mary, who has chaired this project, “they are timeless in terms of their usefulness for prayerful discussion about the stories of the SCLs and their ministries.”

*Sisters and Associates interested in copies for future use can contact Sister Mary Ann Theisen, 913-758-6556 or [matheisen@scls.org](mailto:matheisen@scls.org)*

## Associates, SCLs gather around charism theme

TOP LEFT: Ruth and Dan Dakotas at the March 29 gathering of SCLs and SCLAs at the Mother House.

TOP RIGHT: The SCL charism drew lively discussion at the session with Carolyn Zimmerman making a point as Sister Nancy Bauman listened.

BOTTOM: Sister Sharon Smith, SCLA director, received a comment from Drew Bodner during open discussion at the March 29 meeting. Joanne Bodner is pictured to Drew's right.



# Founding to Future

## SCL Jubilee planning

Coordinating liturgy and prayer for the July 4-6 celebration are Sisters Mary Jo Quinn, Eileen Hurley and Phyllis Stowell.



## July 4-6 celebration to feature national speaker

Sister Regina Bechtle, a Sister of Charity of New York since 1962, will be the featured speaker for the July 4-6, 2008 SCL 150th Jubilee Celebration in Leavenworth, Kan. Reflecting on the SCL heritage and traditions, Sister Regina will set the stage for consideration of the future around themes of conversion, contemplation and courage linked with the virtues of humility, simplicity and charity.

Sister Regina is a spiritual director, retreat leader, writer, educator, theologian and poet. Currently as charism resource director, she develops resources and programs in Vincentian spirituality and history for her congregation and other groups of religious and laity in the Sisters of Charity Federation and the Vincentian family.

She has co-edited a four-volume collection of the writings of St. Elizabeth Seton (New City Press, 2000-2006), a collection of essays on spirituality for lay leaders in Catholic institutions (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), and a resource manual for women religious new to leadership (LCWR, 2001).



Sister Regina Bechtle

Sister Regina has offered presentations and retreats on spirituality, religious life and leadership in South Korea, Guatemala and the Bahamas, the U.S. and Canada. She has given papers at several conferences on the history of women religious.

In her previous ministries, she directed a center for leadership and spirituality at the College of Mount St. Vincent, Riverdale, N.Y., taught theology on graduate and high school levels, and

served on her congregation's leadership team for eight years. During her years in leadership, Sister Regina was active in local, regional and national organizations of women religious leaders.

Sister Regina holds a Ph.D. in theology from Fordham University and a certificate in Vincentian spiritual direction. She has published essays and poetry in religious and theological journals including *America*, *The Way*, *Weavings*, *Vincentian Heritage*, *Review for Religious*, *Presence* and the *National Catholic Reporter*.

### Registration reminder for July 4-6

*SCLs, SCLAs and former sisters:*

If you haven't received your registration form for the July 4-6, 2008

150th Jubilee celebration  
in Leavenworth,

and you plan to attend,  
please email your request

to receive the information to  
[foundingtofuture@scls.org](mailto:foundingtofuture@scls.org).

## Jubilee days to feature SCL art, crafts, displays

During the July Jubilee Celebration, SCLs will have the opportunity to share their artistic and creative talents with other sisters, Associates and former SCLs in attendance. In addition, there will be displays of local Jubilee celebrations.

SCL personal art expressions will be on display in the Fatima Parlor Gallery on the first floor of the Mother House. A “market place” will be available for interested artisans to display and sell their arts and crafts creations. The market place will be located in the former “Habitat,” Berchmans ground floor. Participants in the art display and market place must reserve space by contacting Sisters Ann Barton/Pam Hinkle at [abarton@scls.org](mailto:abarton@scls.org).

The O’Shea Conference Center will be the site for sharing displays descriptive of local celebrations of Jubilee. This could include posters, CDs with many photos, DVDs, newspaper articles, videos, collages or many other varieties of mementos to share with the community at large. Contact Sisters Ann and Pam about equipment and space requirements.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

*July 4-6, 2008 SCL 150th Jubilee Grand Celebration*

#### FRIDAY, JULY 4

1:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Registration SCL photos SCL updating wills	Ryan Center
4:00 p.m.	Gathering to remember Procession to Chapel	Mt. Olivet Cemetery
5:00 p.m.	Welcome, prayer	Annunciation Chapel
5:30 p.m.	Supper	Dining facilities
7:00 p.m.	Entertainment, ice cream social	Mother House main entrance

#### SATURDAY, JULY 5

7:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast	Dining facilities
8:00 a.m.	Mass (available)	Ross Chapel
9:00 a.m. - noon	Morning prayer Featured speaker Group discussion	Ryan Center
Noon	Lunch	Dining facilities
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Concurrent sessions (to be announced) Market place	O’Shea Conference Center and other locations Berchmans ground floor
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Jubilee Justice	Ryan Center
5:30 p.m.	Celebration dinner	Dining facilities
7:30 p.m.	Piano Extravaganza Monster Concert followed by refreshments	Ryan Center  Berchmans ground floor

#### SUNDAY, JULY 6

7:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast	Dining facilities
9:00 - 10:30 a.m.	Featured speaker with responders	Ryan Center
11:00 a.m.	Liturgy, sending forth	Annunciation Chapel
12:30 p.m.	Lunch	Dining facilities



## SCL 150TH JUBILEE NEWS NOTES

### **Billings celebrates SCL connection to Catholic schools**

On Jan 23, SCLs in Billings, Mont., anticipated Catholic Schools Week and celebrated the history of the SCL Catholic schools in the area through narrative scripts presented by students of the four Catholic schools. Billings Catholic Schools students performed "Remembrance Celebration," a review of the 150-year history of the SCLs.

The program was presented in conjunction with the 50th jubilee celebration of St. Pius X Parish and School. (See related article, page 21.) A reception followed the presentation, and pens and bookmarks were distributed. The event was well attended.

Sister Mary Lou Mendel distributed copies of the print "Living the Mission" by Ernst Ulmer to the four Billings schools and the school administration office.

### **St. Francis invited participation in 24-hour prayer vigil**

St. Francis Health Center, Topeka, Kan., invited employees, friends and acquaintances to participate in a 24-hour prayer vigil to celebrate the SCL 150th Jubilee. The vigil occurred on Monday, Feb. 11, the 16th annual World Day of the Sick. Participants selected the time of day they would pray and could participate as an individual or as an organization. The St. Francis spiritual care department coordinated this effort with the goal of honoring the work of the SCLs in caring for the sick and the poor by linking people from around the world in prayer.

### **'Telling Our Story' hosted by Mother House sisters**



▲ Youth from Blessed Sacrament Parish, Kansas City, Kan., attended the prayer service and reception and were greeted by Sisters Marie de Paul Combo and Maureen Hall.

Students from several Kansas City area parishes and schools participated in "Telling Our Story," a program of prayer, song and storytelling at the Mother House on Sunday, Feb. 24. Sister Maureen Hall portrayed Mother Xavier Ross, SCL foundress, and guided guests through the history. A reception, display and additional storytelling followed in O'Shea Conference Center. The Mother House SCLs hosted this Jubilee Year event.

Sisters Mark Friday and Barbara Wieseler coordinated this event. The prayer service was repeated at St. Ann's Parish, Prairie Village, Kan., on Sunday, April 20.



▲ Sister Agnes Eileen Dunn gave pens to two young guests who participated in the program.

### **Newspaper features 'Order's colorful history'**

*The Harvest*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, Montana, featured the SCL 150th Jubilee with extensive coverage in its December 2007 edition. The article was written by Kim Larsen and included the history of

the Community, arrival in Montana and current ministries with a focus on the health ministry.

Included with the article were photographs of the 14 Montana-born SCLs serving in the diocese, the SCL 150th Jubilee logo and the Community logo.

## Mass in KCK marks Jubilee observance

Spirited and well-orchestrated music and song filled the church for the April 6 Mass at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Kansas City, Kan., to mark the SCL 150th Jubilee.

"You are sisters to all of us. Therefore, we are family," Father Bill McEvoy, principal celebrant, said in his homily. Father Bill, pastor of Blessed Sacrament and former SCL student, acknowledged the history, the spirit and the service of the Community.

Sister Marie de Paul Combo offered the reflection at the Mass and encouraged the congregation that "as the world changes, we must change, too." She continued, "It is incumbent upon us to answer the questions: What can we do? What will we do together?"

A reception followed in the parish center with displays of SCL ministries in Wyandotte and Johnson Counties. SCLs in the Greater Kansas City Area will have a celebration on the Missouri side on Sunday, Sept. 14 at 11:30 a.m. at Redemptorist Parish.



▲ Sisters Kevin Marie Flynn (left) and Vickie Perkins bless the congregation assisted by Audrey Kump, great niece of Sister Marie Loretta Modrcin.



▲ Sister Sue Miller (standing) with Frances Burkle and Sister Barbara Kushan.

Representatives of other religious communities including the Sisters, Servants of Mary attended the April 6 Mass and reception in Kansas City, Kan.



Left to right, Sisters Mary Pat Johnson, Irene Skeeahan, Ann Schumacher, Suzanne Retherford; right foreground, Sister Barbara Wieseler.

## Celebration of the Irish connection

Thanks to a suggestion by the Leavenworth SCL 150th Jubilee Committee and the research and creativity of Sister Mary Lenore Martin, SCLs enjoyed bits of the Irish lore of the Community in the days leading up to and following St. Patrick's Day. The Irish "connection" was also the subject matter of a feature in *The Leavenworth Times* that included photographs of some of the early members of the SCLs.



▲ It rained on the parade, but the St. Patrick's Day observance in Leavenworth brought out the SCLs on floats and the likeness of Mother Xavier Ross who clearly rose above the crowd!

### Great Falls observance raises vocation awareness

The weekend of Jan. 19 and 20, Sister Lynn Casey gave the reflection at all Masses at Holy Spirit Parish, Great Falls, Mont. She discussed the 150th Jubilee and the call to religious life. Sister Lynn's presentation and raising of vocational awareness were very well received. Materials from other religious communities and information about the SCLs were available in the vestibule.

Sister Lynn Casey at the vocation display with the SCL banner.



### What can a Woman Do? on stage in Kansas City



▲ Van Ibsen, Sister Diane Steele and Danielle Trebus after the successful performance of the play in Kansas City.

Friends, co-workers, students and family members gathered at the Folly Theater, Kansas City, Mo., on Sunday, March 16, for two performances of "What can a Woman Do?", the play written to commemorate the SCL 150th Jubilee. Van Ibsen, director of the University of Saint Mary theatre department, wrote and produced the play that had premiered in Leavenworth in October 2007.

Van revised and shortened the play for its Kansas City performance. The production met with accolades from guests as an inspiring portrayal of the early history of the Community under Mother Xavier's leadership and a fitting tribute to the SCLs. Danielle Trebus, instructor, fine arts and theatre, assisted with the script, costumes and technical advice. She also coordinated production of the printed program that included tributes to the SCLs.

### The Montana Catholic features SCL history articles

In conjunction with the SCL 150th Jubilee, Sister Dolores Brinkel, Diocese of Helena archivist, is contributing regular columns to *The Montana Catholic* that highlight the Community's history.

In January, Sister Dolores recounted the stories of three of the eight SCLs who came from the small town of Helmville, Mont. Sister Mary Syra Keiley was the first native-born Montanan to enter a religious community; she joined the SCLs in 1891. After serving as a high school English and Latin teacher, Sister Mary Josepha Geary was elected mother general of the Community. Sister Dolores described Sister Mary Hypatia Coughlin as an "SCL builder who seemed to have a genius for reading blueprints and detecting strong or weak workmanship and was a guiding force not only in understanding new buildings but in adding to or remodeling old ones."

In March, Sister Dolores featured the role of SCLs as educators who set high standards for the schools they began.

Editor's note: Please send articles and photos from Jubilee Year events for upcoming editions of *Voices of Charity* to [thorvat@scls.org](mailto:thorvat@scls.org). Depending on timing, we will post these to the SCL website or include them in the publication.



# *My Life with the Saints* lively, engaging



Martin, James. (2006). *My Life with the Saints*. Chicago: Loyola Press.

Reviewed by Sister Mary Pat Lenahan

When I first saw this book advertised in *America* and *The National Catholic Reporter*, I thought that it looked both interesting and inviting. Throughout this book, Father James Martin, SJ, engages the reader in a journey through the ages, highlighting various saints and persons of influence in the Catholic tradition. However, these glimpses are not merely objective snapshots of people's lives. The author introduces them as companions on his own personal, spiritual journey and invites the reader to come along.

As an avid reader and student of history, I have always found biographies and autobiographies captivating and enjoyable adventures. Perhaps this joy comes from my Irish roots and the Celtic tradition of storytelling. Whatever the connection, these stories of individuals and the context of their lives and decisions never cease to

captivate and amaze me. In this book, Father Martin manages to tap into the stories of particular individuals who have become friends and influences in his own life. While he does this, readers, too, begin to travel reflectively through various stages and insights into their own lives and spiritual journeys.

Father Martin is clear about the tremendous and personal impact the lives of these individuals have and continue to play in his life's journey as friends and guides. His style is not preachy or absolute, but, rather, he invites the reader to share in some of his own insights as his spiritual companions share bits and pieces of wisdom that flow from Father Martin's reflections. This inspiring memoir engages the reader to reflect upon those persons who have and continue to shape the spiritual lives of its readers.



# A job with spiritual perks for others and herself



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*As retreat coordinator for Marillac Center, Sister Mary Loretta Beier has what she considers “the best job in the world!”*

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She gets greatest satisfaction from the fact that in arranging retreats, she plays a role in contributing to the spiritual and prayer lives of the SCLs and others who make the retreats. In turn, she believes that this helps enrich the spiritual lives of the people served by the retreatants.

“What better way to advance the coming of God’s reign?” Sister Mary Loretta asked.

Another added personal benefit is that she gets to interact with the retreat directors whom she describes as wonderful people. Plus, since Sister Mary Loretta records the retreat conferences for the St. Elizabeth Seton Library and for individuals, she has the advantage of hearing every session offered.

Sister Mary Loretta has been involved in this ministry since 1977 when she was invited to return “home” to open a place of prayer on the Mother House campus. The former “men’s house” served in that capacity until it was deemed environmentally unsafe and later razed. Sister Mary Loretta and others began to envision and discuss what would become the Marillac Center of the future.

She works part-time in Marillac Center as a member of the team that coordinates a number of programs, hospitality and arrangements. Whereas when she started coordinating retreats, Sister Mary Loretta took care of all arrangements, she welcomes the division of labor

that exists today. Her role is to locate retreat directors and schedule preached, guided and directed retreats, publish the retreat offerings to SCLs and others, and communicate with those who apply for retreats.

Prior to the retreat ministry, with the exception of 14 months she spent as a housemother in SCL orphanages, Sister Mary Loretta was a teacher and principal in elementary schools from 1948 to 1977. She served in schools in the Greater Kansas City area, St. Marys, Kan., and Denver, Colo. Originally from Topeka, Kan., Sister Loretta Marie came from a family of 16 children. Her parents owned a truck farm, and she continued working there for a year following high school before entering the Community in 1946.

As long as she can remember, Sister Mary Loretta said she wanted to be a sister. The only sisters who worked in Topeka were the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth who had taught her for 12 years.

Sister Mary Loretta serves on the Mother House Social Justice Committee, visits sisters in Ross Hall and enjoys reading, solving Sudoku puzzles and playing bridge with one of the bridge teams she helped organize.

Once a week, she tries to write a family letter that she emails to some 90 people! She considers email a blessing not only for her retreat ministry and her work for social justice, but also for communicating with her family and friends.

## Heart of the Matter

# Vision propels Annunciation School to great accomplishments

**A**t a time when many urban core Catholic elementary schools struggle to survive, Annunciation School, Denver, Colo., offers a safe environment, values orientation and religion, teachers eager to serve, counseling and social work services, athletics, spotless hallways, new computers throughout the school, an after school program and well-attended parenting classes.

With an enrollment of 201 students (K-8) for 2007-2008, Annunciation has a waiting list. With 89 percent of the children in households below federal poverty levels, Annunciation embodies an "attitude of gratitude." With 63 percent of children from homes with non-English speaking parents, Annunciation is a welcoming place. With a 95 percent retention rate, Annunciation is a school where students want to be.

Echoing that sentiment, Sister Lin Sayatovic, counselor, observed, "You walk into the school, and you don't want to leave. The atmosphere is so inviting. Parents want their kids here."

### **SCLs at school since 1890**

The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth have been associated with Annunciation since the school opened in 1890. Today, two SCLs and a third year candidate continue that longstanding tradition. Sister Jean Anne Panisko is in her 27th year as principal of the school.



▲ Sister Lin Sayatovic uses a board game during a counseling session with an Annunciation student.

Sister Lin is a counselor, medic and maintenance person. Rejane Cytacki teaches fourth grade.

Rejane said that the kids enjoy being at school and that they find it a safe place. She had previously taught in a public school in the Midwest and spent much of her time doing social work. At Annunciation, two counselors and a social worker help address the problems the kids face. The innovative conflict management program with students as peer mediators also contributes to respectful and peaceful classrooms.

Sister Lin provides individual counseling to students referred by teachers or the social worker. She said that sometimes the students just need a listening

ear. She watches for visible signs of improvement in the sessions and relies on teacher feedback to gauge the progress the children are making.

One of the other great things about Annunciation, in Rejane's estimation, is the solid and stable base of donors that Sister Jean Anne has developed. Because of her longevity at the school, Sister Jean Anne knows the donors and has an outstanding record of securing funds to invest in programs at Annunciation. The conflict management program is a good example, as is a reading intervention program through which "some kids' skills are soaring."

"If Sister Jean Anne sees a need," Rejane said, "she manages to find funds."



▲ Rejane Cytacki's students were industrious with a project to design and then promote their hats to fellow classmates.

## Visioning yields results

Faced with the challenges of an inner city school, changing demographics and many needs, Sister Jean Anne said that the turning point for her came with the realization of the importance of visioning. She had seen a video on visioning at a health system meeting and was struck by the fact that civilizations seemed to survive and thrive if they had visions. She began applying visioning at Annunciation. Coupled with strong networking and hard work, this approach has had outstanding results.

The school has an active advisory council, an alumni association and a diverse donor base. The alumni funded the new computers for the school. Another donor paid for the new gym floor. Another provides the difference between what parents can afford to pay and the school's per pupil cost. Still another donor has adopted seven students from a class and will be funding

their education through high school and college. While blessed to meet current needs, Annunciation also has an endowment as a cushion for the future.

Sister Jean Anne said that in the early years, she used to worry a lot more about

making ends meet. Now her attitude is one of leaving it to God and working hard. "My trust in God has grown from living with the people here who trust in God for everything," she commented.



▲ Victor Avila and Gerarda Valenzuela visited with Sister Jean Anne Panisko at Annunciation School.



# Initial formation survey assesses SCL character

by Sisters Jennifer Gordon and Charlotte White



Sister Jennifer Gordon



Sister Charlotte White

### What are we forming for?

The Initial Formation Task Force, charged with making recommendations about our North American formation process, decided to begin with this question. Answers to the questions came from a survey of 78 SCLs, from all age groups and geographical areas.

Several of the survey questions assessed the SCL character: What should our lives look like? What do we hold dear? What makes us SCLs? While responses were as varied as we are, there were strong threads that tie us together. Each thread wove through every survey question, but they are teased apart in this article.

### What should our lives look like?

As you would expect, the characteristic virtues of simplicity, humility and charity were named most often. However, humility got short shrift! Overwhelmingly, you said, “Our lives should be ones of simplicity – hard to define, but easily recognized.” Hospitality, community, love of the poor, prayerfulness and joy should characterize us.

We look for a common purpose; we “need to be called to something.” We want to “get back to our risk-taking roots,” to be “in solidarity and about a mission.” As part of this, we want to be seen as “part of something larger.”

### What do we hold dear?

First and foremost: each other! We have a fierce loyalty to one another and hold dear

the simple presence of one another. We have a fondness for one another, and we see the goodness – and the quirks – in each. We enjoy our traditions and stories. Likewise, we value highly the laity with whom we work.

We hold dear our faith, our Church, our pioneering American spirit. We have a connectedness to place, to our holy ground in Leavenworth.

### What makes us SCLs?

We hold a deep love for the poor – a love that is lived out in the spirit of Vincent and Xavier. We are about the Godquest as gospel women through a Vincentian lens. We have a desire to serve, to make a difference.

We are as practical as they come, rich in pragmatism and common sense. We view problems as challenges and possess the flexibility to meet them as they come. We are real: homespun and comfortable, not fancy but with a simple, open and direct spirit. Our spirituality is grounded in the real. We like who we are – what you see is what you get.

We definitely know how to have fun. Humor was high on the list of our personality traits, as was knowing how to play. We have a simple, open friendliness and joy.

Of course, many more threads fill out the cloth that is SCL, woven on love of God, trust in Divine Providence, and deep delight that the beginning and end of our coming together is our Lord Jesus Christ. We are connected at the core – a deep river runs beneath us all.

### Initial Formation Task Force

The Initial Formation Task Force includes Sisters Ann Schumacher and

Susan Chase (co-chairs), Carolyn Gloege, Jennifer Gordon, Eileen Hurley, Charlotte White and Amy Willcott.

Resource members are Sisters Nancy Bauman, Catrina Bones, Rosalie Curtin, Mary Lou Mendel and Sharon Smith.



# Spontaneity and the Spirit spur volunteer ministry



Sisters J. Vianney Martinez and Mary Clarita Sternitzke may have officially retired three years ago, but they continue to minister as volunteers at a very active pace as they serve diverse needs of All Saints Parish, Denver, Colo.

“We’re very spontaneous,” Sister J. Vianney (left, above) explained. “Whatever the Spirit prompts us to do, we do!”

Between the Spirit’s prompting and the pastor’s comfort level with asking the two SCLs for their assistance, Sisters J. Vianney and Mary Clarita (right, above) have full schedules as parish volunteers. Sister Mary Clarita leads congregational singing at Sunday Mass and also is a Sunday sacristan. Twice a week, she reads for the early morning Masses. She

makes home visits as a Eucharistic minister. In addition, she has an active letter-writing ministry and follows-up with parishioners after their hospitalization.

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**When they retired, they knew that they wanted to remain active, and the idea of volunteering at All Saints, a multicultural parish, appealed to them.**

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Sister J. Vianney has a telephone ministry with widows in the parish, does nursing home visits, is a sacristan, lectors and serves as a Eucharistic minister. She speaks with one 86-year-old parishioner

every day. Other days, she takes some of the widows out to lunch or plans group get-togethers.

The sisters have flexible schedules and time to spend with people. “When we take Communion,” Sister Mary Clarita said, “we don’t rush in and out. We visit with the people in their homes.”

Over the years, the two SCLs have transitioned from being teachers to serving in parish ministry and then working with Denver Archdiocesan Housing. When they retired, they knew that they wanted to remain active, and the idea of volunteering at All Saints, a multicultural parish, appealed to them.

“We like having a variety of things to do,” Sister J. Vianney said.

## USM nursing program accredited

The University of Saint Mary (USM) Bachelor of Science in Nursing program has been accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The nursing program gained initial accreditation for the maximum period of five years.

"This affirms the quality of our program and is a tribute to all the people who have built, taught and supported our nursing program," said Rebecca Cahill, nursing program director.

"CCNE sets a high standard for baccalaureate nursing programs, and we're extremely pleased to have earned accreditation," said Dr. Sandra Van Hoose, vice president and dean of academic affairs. "As we continue to build our nursing program, the CCNE recognition validates the academic quality and high standards that inform our curriculum and programmatic values."

The commission evaluates program quality in four areas: mission and governance; institutional commitment and resources; curriculum and teaching-learning resources; and program effectiveness.

A big cheer rang out in the nursing department on the fourth floor of Mead Hall as the announcement was made to a classroom of senior nursing students. USM President Sister Diane Steele delivered the news along with celebratory ice cream.

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## Leadership Camp for 6th through 8th grade girls

The annual Leadership Camp for 6th through 8th grade girls is scheduled June 25-27 on the campus of the Benedictine Sisters, Mount St. Scholastica, 801 South 8th Street, Atchison, Kan.

The camp is co-hosted by the Sisters of Charity Leavenworth; the Ursuline Sisters, Paola; and the Benedictines.

The purpose of the camp is to enhance leadership skills of the participants and to introduce them to sisters. Sister Suzanne Fitzmaurice, Benedictine Sisters' vocation minister, recommended early registration due to the fact that the camp fills up quickly. Registration deadline is May 23.

Registration fee is \$145 and includes room and board, meals and camp activities. To register, email Sister Suzanne at [vocations@mountosb.org](mailto:vocations@mountosb.org) or call 913-360-6200.

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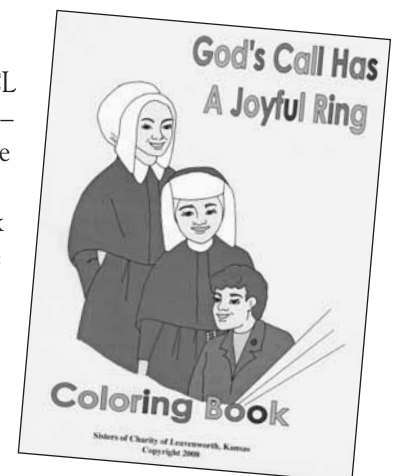
## Coloring book promotes vocations

A great idea sparked by SCL creativity has resulted in a coloring book that shares the SCL story and promotes vocations.

The idea was the brainchild of the SCL Vocation Network. The coloring book's title – "God's Call Has A Joyful Ring" – matches the name of the SCL vocation DVD.

Sisters Jennifer Gordon and Peg Johnson took the lead on the project with the assistance of the artistic talents of Sisters Marjorie Cushing and Pam Hinkle. Sister Mary Corita Conlan enlisted the printing support of Hall Commercial Printing, Topeka, Kan. Sister Sharon Smith, SCL vocation director, worked with the committee on the project.

Coloring books are \$1.00 apiece. To obtain copies of the coloring book for distribution, contact Sister Mary Ann Theisen, [matheisen@scls.org](mailto:matheisen@scls.org) or 913-758-6556.



*It was a joyful and memory-filled homecoming when Sisters Mary Julitta Doerhoff and Anita Sullivan returned to Billings, Mont., in January for the 50th anniversary of both St. Pius X Parish and School.*

## SCLs enjoy homecoming at Billings parish, school



▲ Sister Mary Julitta Doerhoff enjoyed the gathering of friends united for the St. Pius X golden jubilee celebration in Billings.



▲ Sister Anita Sullivan caught up with acquaintances at the dinner for charter members of the parish.

Sisters Mary Julitta, Anita and Susan Pryor were charter members of the parish and school. Not only was Sister Mary Julitta the first principal and 8th grade teacher, it was the first time she had ever been a principal as a young sister. Sister Anita originally taught 6th and 7th grades at the school; Sister Susan, a class of 80 1st graders!

"We had nothing," Sister Mary Julitta recalled, "and we started the new school. Msgr. Zarek, our pastor at the time, thought that if we had four walls for the building, the school was finished!"

The school opened with 450 students. Within two years, enrollment was up to 700! "We had so little," Sister Anita said, "except we had a lot of kids!"

In 1987, St. Pius consolidated with other Billings Catholic schools. St. Pius X School is now called St. Francis Intermediate School. The parish has generously supported the SCL Peruvian missions since 1982 with regular financial donations.

Golden jubilee festivities included a dinner and Mass for charter members of the parish and the clergy. Bishop Michael W. Warfel, newly installed bishop of the diocese, was principal celebrant for the Jan. 22 Mass. The next day, the SCLs in the area hosted a 150th Jubilee celebration coordinated by Sister Jean Martin Dawson and involving students in different roles.

Thursday, Jan. 24 focused on the school's celebration with a Mass and reception for former principals, students

and teachers and people currently associated with the school at St. Pius X Parish. Sisters Mary Julitta and Anita spoke at the Mass and shared their recollections from 50 years ago.

What impressed Sister Mary Julitta most about the entire 50th Jubilee experience was seeing her students "having grown up and what they have accomplished in life." Because they had such large classes during the height of the baby boom years, Sister Mary Julitta worried that the students might not be getting what they needed to succeed in life.

Some of her former students dismissed her concerns and stated that they learned how to study and that Church, school, family and discipline carried them through their lives.



## OF SPECIAL NOTE

*In this section, the Voices of Charity highlights sisters, associates and friends who have earned special honors or been in the news.*

### **Dedication, history wall commemorate anniversary**

A special ceremony on March 19, the traditional feast of St. Joseph, commemorated the 150th history of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and 135 years of Saint Joseph Hospital (now Exempla Saint Joseph), Denver, Colo. The highlight of the celebration was the blessing and dedication of The History Wall that features historic panels and memorabilia marking the hospital's history.

Sister Melissa Camardo, director of sponsorship at Exempla Saint Joseph, moderated the ceremony and offered the reflection. Also participating as readers in the program were Sisters Maureen Kehoe and Mary Walter Swann. Christine Eitemiller, SCLA, provided music for the event. Sisters Maureen, Melissa and Mary Rosenda



▲ Sister Renee Washut admired the artistry and information on The History Wall.



▲ Sister Maureen Kehoe and a guest at one of the wall panels.

Arkfeld wrote the petitions relating them to different wall panels.

The 10 panels of the history walls represent the spirituality of the SCLs; St. Joseph's School of Nursing; SCLs who have served at the hospital; care provided for patients; benefactors; volunteers; medical education and residency programs; technological advances; buildings for healing and health; and the future.

In her reflection on Luke's Gospel passage about a year of favor from the Lord, Sister Melissa said, "Truly, we are chosen and blessed to be a part of the healing work that started 135 years ago and that lives today in us, and through us, so that future generations will someday look back on our time as the 'heritage' and know that it is, and has always been, good news."



### Founders' Award to Sister Judith

Sister Judith Jackson, vice president, sponsorship, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System (SCLHS), Lenexa, Kan., received the Founders' Award at the sixth annual Providence Saint John Founders' Gala on March 1 in Kansas City, Kan.

Approximately 750 people looked on as Sister Judith accepted the honor. "To receive this award is a graced privilege," Sister Judith said. "I accept the Founders' Award on behalf of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth who have served at Providence and Saint John through the years."

"Sister Judith has given so much of her time, treasure and talent to the Providence Saint John Foundation, that it is only fitting we honor her for all she has done," said Mary Ellen Clark, foundation executive director. "She was an



▲ Sister Judith Jackson's family at the Providence Saint John Gala where she was honored; left to right, Roger and Nadyne Jackson, Sister Judith and Sister Jane Jackson.

integral part of the foundation from the outset, and her advice and wisdom have helped us balance the need to serve the community by providing quality and compassionate health care."

Sister Judith served on the foundation board from 1997 to 2003. She also was on the Providence Medical Center and Saint John Hospital board of directors from 1998 to 2004.

## In this 150th Year of Jubilee of the SCLs, we congratulate individual SCLs marking special jubilees

### 75 YEARS

Sister Frances Cecilia Domme  
Sister Jeanne Marie Zeugin

### 70 YEARS

Sister Virginia Flanick  
Sister Ann Winifred McGarry  
Sister Rose Orchard  
Sister Agnes Eileen Dunn  
Sister Margaret Pfennigs  
Sister Mary Cecilia Carig

### 60 YEARS

Sister Marie Madeleine Shonka  
Sister Mary Clarita Sternitzke

Sister Rita Marie Anderson

Sister Charles Marie Beeby

Sister Marie Brinkman

Sister Marie Noel Bruch

Sister Anne Callahan

Sister Marie de Paul Combo

Sister Dolores Erman

Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer

Sister Ann Louis LaLonde

Sister Vincent Clare McDonald

Sister Audrey Meanor

Sister Mary Corita Conlan

Sister Edna Hunthausen

### 50 YEARS

Sister Loretto Marie Colwell

Sister Marjorie Feuerborn

Sister Rita Smith

Sister Patricia Toeckes

Sister Ann McGuire

Sister Mary Julianne O'Flannigan

### 25 YEARS

Sister Diane Steele

Sister Nancy Svetlecic

Sister Amy Willcott

*(Due to the timing of this publication, this article is late for the season, but the delightful account spreads holiday cheer year-round! The article features preparations leading up to and including the open house for employees of Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver Colo., hosted by SCLs in their convent on Dec. 14.)*

### Hospital employees treated to convent tour

by Sister Mary Rosenda Arkfeld

The long-awaited day finally arrived to welcome the employees to our home on the 11th floor, which was the mysterious place for all visitors.

After 13 days of baking breads, cookies and bars, the cupboards and refrigerators were filled to the brim. Sisters Mary, Maureen and Renee found their favorite recipes and did us proud. We had a huge variety of many kinds of tasty goodies.

The cleaning crew had moved in, and with Sister Mary Rosenda's supervision, the convent was changed into a sparkling dwelling. The generous environmental group came to our rescue vacuuming and polishing the floors. As we stood back, checking each room we remarked, "We clean up good!"

It was time then to pause and change our spotless home into a Christmas fairyland. Sister Renee brought a tree and many gorgeous decorations from a past mission. She worked long hours to make it dazzle with warmth and beauty. Then, the other nine of us used our creative abilities to decorate the remainder of the community room and the crib, as well as the halls and doors.

Invitations were drafted by Sister Maureen, printed on Christmas stationery and distributed by Sister Mary to each department. Then our good friend, Mary Cox, designed holiday nametags for each sister so our guests could identify us. Mary also made a guest book for all to sign with our group picture on the cover and cards with quotes of Mother Xavier that would be given to each visitor.

The day before this milestone, all of us were cutting, arranging and preparing trays of our delicacies, so all would be well nourished. At 1:50 p.m. on the 14th,



▲ 'Twas the season to be jolly as Sister Renee Washut (foreground) and Sister Maureen Kehoe (in hat) replenished refreshments for guests.

our first guest, Bob Minkin, our CEO, arrived to check if all was ready and to taste the goodies, as well as to admire our teamwork.

Sister Mary Aloys then took her designated chair at the entrance. Here she graciously greeted each employee. She had them sign the guest book and then presented them with Mother Xavier's card with the quotes.

Sisters Mary Rosenda and Renee were inside the door to greet guests with a warm welcome. Later, Sister Barbara Schrader, our guest, helped us at this post and was amazed at how happy each employee was to see us. Sisters Mary Walter and Maureen escorted the guests to the community room where they received a delicious homemade punch, hot tea, sparkling cider or coffee served graciously by Sisters Sheila and Mary. After viewing the hidden mountains, the beautiful tree and the crib scene, guests were accompanied

down the hall to the refreshment table where an array of scrumptious foods awaited them.

Here Sister Marie Paula admitted guests into the famous Bronco room with the orange and blue décor. This was one of the main attractions as sister explained all of the signs and memorabilia that we had collected. All were thrilled to see our loyalty to the team.

Sister Maureen also took those who desired to view the deck outside which is our veranda. Sisters Mary Walter and Melissa plus Rejane directed them to see the other parts of the convent. We saved the best wine for last: the encounter with the Falks – Sisters Owen Marie and Marie de Lourdes who were presiding at their appointed chairs. Here they directed the departing traffic to the elevator or down the stairs. These friendly and vibrant sisters informed the employees – or misinformed them – of any parts the rest of us forgot.

By then, we were ready to walk on our knees to bed. But 30 carolers came from the hospital to serenade us with carols and leave us with happy hearts. They were excellent and provided a perfect atmosphere for a memorable day. We had sufficient cookies and breads left to send 12 plates with the carolers to the various departments.

When all had disappeared, the 10 of us dug in and worked together to put everything away, packing the food and cleaning the kitchen and halls. Some received foot massages to ease tired feet. Then we helped each other to our bedrooms with hearts full of gratitude and happiness for the 500 or more that enjoyed this event.

We thanked God that this celebration comes only once every 150 years! What greater way is there to build community and make us proud to be Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth!

If we've overlooked an item of importance, please email ([thorvat@scls.org](mailto:thorvat@scls.org)) or mail information to Communications, Cantwell Hall, 4200 South Fourth Street, Leavenworth, KS 66048-5054.

## Beyond All Borders

# From Billings to Africa, AIDSpirit offers support

*From hot meals for patients in Yellowstone County to financial support for orphans in Kenya and Uganda, AIDSpirit is making a difference in Montana and across the globe. Helping coordinate a number of these efforts is Sister Mary Vincentia Maronick who has volunteered with the program since 1996 as chairperson, secretary and now treasurer.*



Sister Mary Vincentia Maronick

An article that appeared in the November 2007 edition of the *Billings Gazette* featured the work of AIDSpirit, a totally volunteer operated program.

Sister Mary Vincentia described AIDSpirit as being part of the solution to the growing problem of HIV/AIDS. AIDSpirit accomplishes this through the generosity of dedicated volunteers, the support of a number of community organizations, education, outreach and fund-raising activities.

On a daily basis, volunteers deliver hot meals to 10 to 20 persons in Billings and the surrounding area. Individuals and three restaurants prepare the food. St. Vincent Healthcare contributes frozen meals for distribution to AIDSpirit clients.

As much as the food nourishes their bodies, the volunteer visits boost the spirits of the persons with AIDS. Or as Sister Mary Vincentia noted, "The meal program helps us get into people's houses and hearts."

AIDSpirit is about compassionate caring for people who may lack financial resources or strength to prepare a nutritious meal. If the opportunity presents, volunteers encourage the clients spiritually.

Originally founded by Father Tom Beggin, AIDSpirit is ecumenical both in its volunteers and in the people it serves. There is also a mix of ages and stages of life represented.

Father Beggin was instrumental in getting the program to look beyond Billings and to begin fundraising projects to help children in Africa who have AIDS or who have lost their parents to the disease. Since 2000, AIDSpirit has collected

over \$30,000 to benefit these children. With those funds and \$200 sponsorships from other persons, AIDSpirit is paying for the education of 33 students in Uganda.

Most recently, AIDSpirit has raised funds to help provide clean water for the students and their families in Africa. Terry Fetting, AIDSpirit chairperson, traveled to Uganda in January to deliver 1,000 LifeStraws. These are simple tools for personal use that purify drinking water of 99.9 percent of bacteria and 98 percent of water-borne viruses. The straws are shipped from Denmark, cost \$5.00 apiece and last one year.

AIDSpirit is also raising funds to provide bio-sand filters that will purify the water African women bring into their homes. Sister Mary Vincentia said that the women walk miles for the water that is polluted. The filters will allow them to benefit from the fruit of their labors with safe drinking water.

Members of AIDSpirit meet monthly at Holy Rosary Parish, Billings, and new members are welcome to join the program. Members also meet on Fridays at the parish to make AIDSpirit African Angel dolls sold to raise funds to help support education programs and provide assistance for AIDS widows and orphans. The dolls are \$5 each and include a card that has the name of an African child who has died from AIDS. For more information, contact Sister Mary Vincentia, 406-252-0395, or visit [www.aidspiritmontana.org](http://www.aidspiritmontana.org).

*(Adapted from "AIDSpirit volunteers reach out to help," Billings Gazette, Nov. 30, 2007.)*



*Sister Kevin Marie Flynn keeps a memory book of persons she has known who have died from HIV/AIDS since she began her ministry with Good Samaritan Project, Kansas City, Mo.*

## Being Church for people with AIDS

From 1988 through 1996, many names fill the pages in a litany of losses from the disease. The advent of new medicines and changing societal norms have made a world of difference since that time. There are new challenges, however, Sister Kevin Marie noted, as persons living with AIDS grow older and face loneliness due to the deaths of many of their friends.

For almost 20 years, Sister Kevin Marie has sought to bring hope in the midst of the ravages of the disease and

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*I've stayed here  
because I love the work.  
I am fulfilled by doing  
what I do as much as  
the clients are by what I do.  
I can help support them;  
I can be Church for them.*

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—Sister Kevin Marie Flynn

consolation at the time of losses. She began at Good Samaritan Project in 1988 as a volunteer and in 1989 joined the staff as spiritual coordinator.

"No one back then knew anything about AIDS," Sister Kevin Marie recalled. "There was mostly fear and a lot of ignorance."

Good Samaritan began small – with a staff of three serving 50 clients. It was the first agency of its kind in the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area. Today the organization has 22 staff, offices in both Kansas and Missouri and a wide array of direct care and preventive services.

Sister Kevin Marie's position as spiritual coordinator evolved from the need expressed by clients to discuss spiritual matters. "They trusted that I would be in their corner with them," she said.

"I've gotten to know people when they were healthy and then walked with them through a crisis," sister observed. "I'm just a presence for them."

The value of her presence is apparent at SAVE Home, the residential hospice home where Good Samaritan started and that has since branched off as its



▲ Sister Kevin Marie with residents of SAVE Home where she prepares a meal weekly on what she calls "Eucharist Day."



▲ Visuals like this quilted wall-hanging commemorate the lives of AIDS victims from the years Sister Kevin Marie has ministered through the Good Samaritan Project.

own organization. Sister Kevin Marie volunteers and cooks a meal each Thursday for the men at the home. She calls this “Eucharist Day” as the group of people with broken bodies gather around the table and get life from their time together.

Last year, Sister Kevin Marie transitioned to volunteer status at Good Samaritan. She continues to go into the office four days a week. She makes phone calls, facilitates a woman’s

support group once a month and visits at another hospice and at hospitals when time permits. She is with the dying when she can be and conducts memorial services on request of clients or their families.

“I’ve stayed here because I love the work,” Sister Kevin Marie said. “I am fulfilled by doing what I do as much as the clients are by what I do. I can help support them; I can be Church for them.”

## 2008 schedule for Fondwa Visitor Program

The Association of Peasants of Fondwa, Haiti, invites interested persons to learn about the organization and how it works to empower people through a six-day lived experience as a visitor to the area. Participants will engage in seminars and activities with the peasants of the region as their teachers. Church groups, social justice groups, college and university students, religious community members and others are encouraged to participate.

Groups can select from the following schedule to arrange their trip:

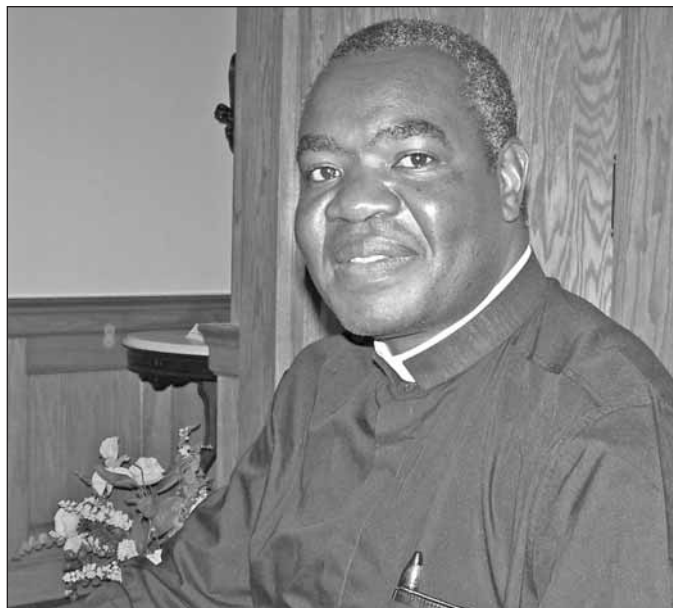
June 19-24	Oct. 16-21
July 17-22	Nov. 13-18
Aug. 21-25	Dec. 11-16
Sept. 11-16	

Total cost of the six-day program is \$650 per person (U.S.). This includes lodging in Fondwa and Port-au-Prince; all activities, seminars, classes and informational materials; and transportation while in Haiti, including airport transfer. Airfare is not included.

Sandra Hick, SCLA, is the U.S. coordinator of the Fondwa Visitor Program. For more information, contact her at [srhick@lycos.com](mailto:srhick@lycos.com).

# Sabbatical brings Kenyan priest to Kansas

When Father Anthony Kiplagat ventured to Leavenworth in 2006 in search of a place to spend his sabbatical, he inquired about meeting the “mother superior general” of the Community. He laughs now because no one knew whom he was talking about at the time.



Father Anthony Kiplagat

He eventually connected with Sister Sue Miller, Community director, and then with Sister Diane Steele, president of the University of Saint Mary (USM). Father Anthony found both welcoming and accepting. A year later after coordination with his bishop in the Diocese of Eldoret, Kenya, and the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, Father Anthony began classes at USM in fall 2007.

He has weathered a harsh Kansas winter and the rigors of college studies. Even more significantly, Father Anthony monitored the post-election violence and tribal fighting in his homeland earlier this year. He suffered a personal loss with the news that a priest friend was stoned to death.

The tribalism and fighting are very foreign to Father Anthony who was brought up in a rural community where people respect members of other tribes. He attended school with students from other tribes; members of his family have intermarried among tribes. The Diocese of Eldoret is multi-tribal.

Questions surrounding the outcome of the December 2007 presidential election in Kenya triggered tribalism at its extreme with widespread violence. Kofi Annan, former UN secretary general, mediated the situation that led to a power-sharing agreement between the incumbent president and the opposition leader. Issues continue to be worked out, and Father Anthony keeps abreast of the potentially volatile situation.

He is concerned about the people who may have been evicted from areas due to tribal differences and the process of bringing them back into the fold when they return to their homes and parishes. He thinks this will require someone who can help people work for reconciliation and learn how to co-exist again in spite of the recent experiences that pitted them against each other.

That need and the fact that his 15 years of parish ministry involved counseling have led Father Anthony to focus on pursuing a counseling degree. He wants to learn and develop skills in this discipline that he can apply when he returns to Kenya.

In the meantime, he appreciates that the SCLs have made him feel at home, have been helpful and very friendly. “My heart is really touched by them,” he said.

He expressed special gratitude to Sister Sue “for accommodating me in her heart and in the hearts of the Sisters of Charity”; to Sister Diane “for accepting me and helping me get the scholarship to study at the University of Saint Mary”; and to Sister Ann Barton for the coordination she has provided.

“They have all helped me live in the love and hope of Mother Xavier, their foundress who said ‘look forward to the good that is yet to come,’” Father Anthony said, “and in this case, I am experiencing that good.”



Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

## Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Perpetual Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary

“Before Mother Xavier left Nashville, the community commenced a Novena to the Queen of Heaven, promising her that if she would provide a home for them, the same Novena should be said in aeternum in her honor, and to commemorate her mercy in this regard.” (*History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth*, by Sister Mary Buckner, 1898)

There have been different novenas composed by SCLs over the past 150 years including one for the 150th Jubilee Year, written by Sister Rita McGinnis. The following is one adaptation of the original novena. Associates (referenced in the adapted copy) are invited to pray this version daily.

Incomparable Virgin, chosen by the Blessed Trinity

from all eternity

to be the Mother of Jesus,

allow me to share the joy you received in the

sacred incarnation of Christ our Lord.

Grant me the vision to see

that the incarnation is going on in the world today.

Help me to share the Incarnation

by cooperating with Jesus and with you

to prepare the world

to be His new creation.

Obtain for me from Jesus a true Christian spirit

and a great love for you and for Him.

May the light of the prayers, works, joys and sufferings

of all Christians

rise to remind you that you are our Mother.

Please continue your motherly care for each

Sister of Charity of Leavenworth and Associate

and for all God's people

until we share fully in the risen life of your Son.

Amen.

V O I C E S

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of Charity



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