

V O I C E S

A quarterly publication of the
SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF LEAVENWORTH

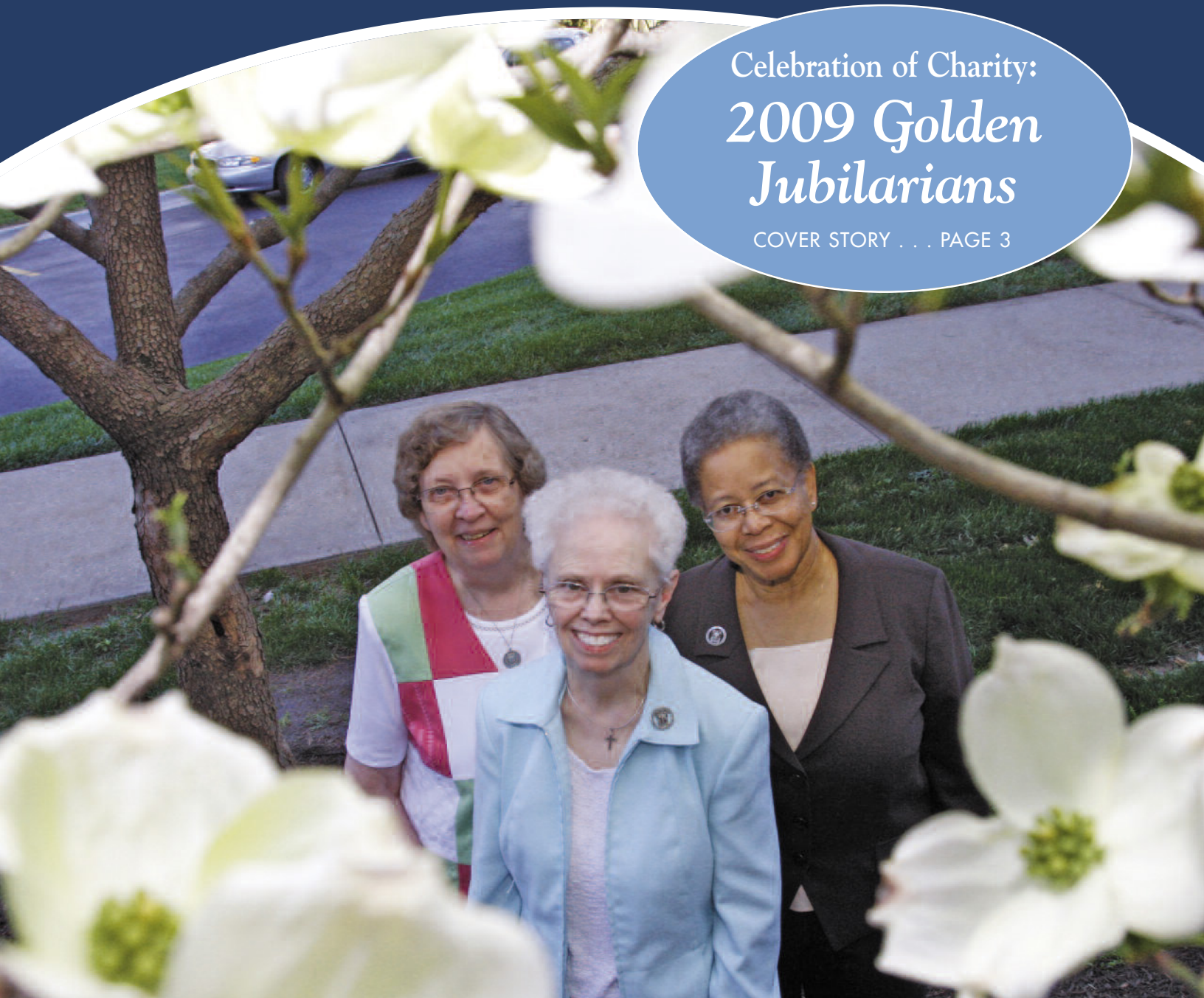
of Charity

SUMMER 2009



Celebration of Charity: *2009 Golden Jubilarians*

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Heart of the Matter HEALTH MINISTRY AT MOTHER HOUSE PAGE 27

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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JUNE 2009

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COVER PHOTO: Their journey as SCLs began 50 years ago at the Mother House for Golden Jubilarians Sisters Donna Jean Henson, Vickie Perkins and Constance Phelps.

from the Community Director



Sister Joan Sue Miller

In early June, I was with my University of Saint Mary alumnae class members who are celebrating 50 years since graduation. We reminisced and shared stories across the years that have intervened.

It seems like only yesterday that our SCL Community was in the midst of celebrating our 150th Jubilee. Now, we are deep into planning the June 2010 Chapter that will be upon us before we know it. Poets write that time is fleeting, and we realize this all too well as months and years slip away so quickly. Yet, God's abiding love and goodness weave through this rapid passage of time.

Believing in the endurance of Divine Providence and the call to be instruments of God's love are themes that characterize the vocations of this year's SCL Golden Jubilarians. To a person, each of these sisters responded to the call of Charity. They heard it at different moments in their young lives. They lived it through a variety of ministries. They continue to respond through service, prayer and fidelity to their vows – as have the other SCLs who have lived through times of tremendous change in our Church and world.

You may have read or heard that religious communities in the United States are participating in an apostolic visitation during these months. The purpose of the visitation is to examine the vibrancy, obstacles and challenges facing vowed consecrated religious today. I view this as an opportunity to share the impact of our SCL charism over the past 150 years and to proclaim how we respond to the call of Charity today. Vincent de Paul said that "Charity is like a flame which soars aloft." Our engagement in the work of Charity is ever wider, beyond our national borders and Peru to Haiti, Kenya, Sudan and wherever God calls.

Vincent also said that "the work of Our Lord is dependent less upon many workers, than upon the fidelity of the few He calls." We continue to work to encourage vocations and ask for your assistance in cultivating this possibility among young women you know. While never complacent, we heed Vincent's advice to "abandon ourselves to the Providence of God." It is from that source that Charity and new life will come.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Joan Sue Miller".

Sister Joan Sue Miller
SCL Community Director

*Congratulations and blessings to the eight Golden Jubilarians
who have shared their stories on the pages that follow.
They continue a long tradition of service by Sisters of Charity
who have responded to the call of their vocations.*

Celebration of Charity

Sister Barbara Aldrich

I was born in the river city of LaCrosse, Wisc. Water, particularly lakes, was an important part of my childhood. My parents, Lyman and Mary Aldrich, actually met on a lake, and after we moved to Kansas City, our summer vacations were spent with family on Wisconsin lakes. Since we had no relatives in KC, we looked forward to and planned these trips “home” all year round – they were the highlight of each year. In retrospect, I realize these were times of community, light heartedness, relationship building, peaceful contemplation while sitting for hours fishing from a boat, and in general, growing up. My last trip to the Wisconsin lakes was the summer I entered the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

I attended Catholic grade school in Kansas City and then went on to Bishop Hogan High School. It was here that I first met the Sisters of Charity who had a different spirit from the sisters I had in elementary school. What I noticed was that they were down to earth, unsophisticated, genuine, fun loving and REAL. Most were good teachers who engaged us rather than teaching from rote.

My parents weren’t thrilled when I felt a certain conviction that I should enter the novitiate at age 17 right after high school. I regret the anguish it put them through and to this day appreciate that they reluctantly gave me



the go ahead. In many ways, I feel my life has been an adventure from that day forward.

I was blessed to be missioned west for my first three teaching assignments – Billings, Mont., Rock Springs, Wyo., and Grand Junction, Colo. I loved the spirit of the West and a certain sense of freedom. Many of the kids wore cowboy boots to school and exposed me to a new kind of nature, much more rugged than my previous Midwest experience. I remember two of my Rock Springs’ students taking me to coyote dens one weekend. I remember marking the school year by the beginning of various hunting seasons. I was challenged and stretched in many ways and honed my teaching skills during these years, learning right along with my students.

I was equally blessed to be missioned back to the Kansas City area in 1970 where I remained in various assignments for 34 years. However, it took a full year to stop thinking something was missing when I couldn’t see mountains! Happily, a group of SCL friends started the tradition of going to Santa Maria each summer, so I still got my “mountain fix”!

One of the blessings of these Midwest years was that I saw many of my nieces and nephews grow from birth to young adulthood. At the time, my Community life and family life intersected. My younger brother gave presentations at two of the schools, and family members came to school events.

I obtained my bachelor’s degree in education as an adult student over many years, receiving my degree in 1972. I continued to thrive as a teacher and had time to be

very involved in the parishes where I worked. I had no desire to be a school principal, mainly because I observed some administrators who seemed to be “burdened” by the role, and whatever I did, I wanted to do it joyfully and wholeheartedly. When I did become first a co-principal and then principal, I was happily surprised at how much I loved it. I pursued my master’s in administration from the University of Dayton in Ohio, while serving as principal at Blessed Sacrament in Kansas City, Kan. The Blessed Sacrament experience was growthful and enriching in that it was my first exposure to the inner city as a minority. It helped prepare me for my next role in administration at Bishop Hogan High School. I consider those 12 years some of the most transformative of my life – years that were such a blessing.

Starting in 1992, I had the privilege of serving my Community as a member of the SCL Council for 12 years. I truly missed school administration but experienced numerous other blessings that compensated for that loss. The richness of being a companion to our sisters at significant times of their lives was humbling. It was during this time that I became exposed to our Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System ministry. At first, it was overwhelming, but in time I came to love it.

In God’s Providence, those 12 years prepared me for the nearly five years I’ve ministered at St. Mary’s Hospital & Regional Medical Center in Grand Junction, where I currently serve as the vice president of mission integration. In many ways, it’s full circle – back to administration, which I love, and back to the West.

These 50 years as an SCL are full of grace. I’m grateful!

Sister Patricia Canty

My early years growing up in Butte, Mont., were truly blessed and exciting. I was the oldest of the four children of Lilyan McCanna Canty and Charles Canty. My three younger brothers and I were close enough in age that we could hop on our bicycles and travel all over the backroads west of town or



climb to the top of Big Butte and look out over the world. Once a week during the summer, we squashed together in the back seat of our car with our English setter in the middle and went fishing on the Big Hole River. My Dad and brothers did most of the fishing while Mom and I sat on a picnic bench and talked about everything under the sun. At the end of the day, it was always fried chicken and bread and butter sandwiches.

I attended St. Patrick’s Grade School all eight years and Girls’ Central High School. Both were staffed by the Sisters of Charity, and for 12 years I was privileged to be taught by the best and kindest teachers in the world. The joy and enthusiasm of the sisters inspired me to think about a religious vocation very early in my life. Even though I would have liked to have my own family, I somehow knew that being a sister would be the path that I would follow.

When I graduated from Central, I decided to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., for a year. One year evolved into four, and after graduation, I taught for two years in a little town north of Spokane called Milan. Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan was the inspiration for my finally getting my act together and applying for the novitiate and entering in 1959.

I was a little older than most of my novitiate group. They called me “The Old Lady,” but I loved them and actually enjoyed almost every day of those two years. I was assigned to substitute at several schools during my juniorate but kept returning long enough to be included in this new program. By 1963, I began the first of 45 years of classroom teaching. I often taught music, social studies or reading, but most of the time, I taught everything in a self-contained middle-grade classroom. My favorite mission was Annunciation School in Denver, Colo., where I taught for 16 years. I still hope to return there someday as a tutor, and I try to keep up my language skills.

For the past four years, I have been part of the Foster Grandparent Program in Butte. I can’t climb to the top of Big Butte any more since it is the location of a microwave transmitter (and I doubt if I could make it up there anyhow!). I do a variety of things to help the teachers at Central Elementary and tutor students who need to keep up on their assignments. I also have the opportunity to visit my family and get to know the younger generation.

When my brothers and I ramble on about some of the things we did as children, the great nephews and nieces think we are exaggerating. If they only knew how much fun we had.

My life has been so good, and I have encountered so many wonderful people. Each day makes me more grateful that I followed my heart and that special people like Sister Mary Seraphine, Sister Mary Madeleva Ditmars, Sister Regina DeCoursey and Sister Rose Gertrude Gardner Hamilton were there for me in those wild and early days.

Sister Donna Jean Henson

July 27, 1939 marks the date of my birth at St. Francis Hospital in Topeka, Kan., the oldest of five children born to Earl and Helen Henson.

One of my earliest childhood memories takes me back to Sacred Heart Church in Topeka. Mom, Dad and I were attending holy hour, and I was climbing around over the kneeler and asking, "When can we go home?" My Dad put his arm around me and drew me to his side, whispering, "Look, that's Jesus up there." I was spellbound as I realized that this was the One my parents had been teaching me to pray to every night before I went to bed. Thus began my devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

I attended Holy Name School in Topeka from first to seventh grades. Then my family moved to a farm near Nortonville, Kan., and it was there that I completed my elementary education at St. Joseph School. I attended Nortonville Rural High and graduated in 1957.

Upon graduating from high school, I wanted to enter the Sisters of Charity, but my Dad said that he didn't want



me to make any decisions about how I would spend my life until I had a little more experience. So I went to work for a year at the Agricultural Conservation and Stabilization Office in Oskaloosa, Kan., and I was able to save enough money to pay for a year of college. Saint Mary College in Leavenworth, Kan., was my choice as it was right next door to the SCL Mother House.

What was the source of this desire to enter the convent? I believe that God gave me that desire when I was quite young. You see, I had an aunt (now deceased) who was a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth – Sister Rose Bernard Renyer.

I didn't see her very often, but when I did I was impressed by her kind and gentle spirit. When I reached high school age, I began to think that God wanted me to be a missionary. At that time, the SCLs had no foreign missions, and I didn't really want to be a missionary or to leave my family, friends and all the conveniences of life in the U.S. No, that was not for me. But the idea pursued me to my freshman year at Saint Mary, so I sought the advice of a priest who told me that God usually leads people by desires.

I entered the Sisters of Charity on Aug. 22, 1959 and received the name Sister Dorothy Therese. From 1962 until 1982, I taught in elementary schools in Wyoming, Missouri, Montana, Kansas and Illinois. Periodically during those years, we received 3 by 5 cards asking for volunteers to go to our foreign missions. (We had opened missions in Peru and Bolivia in the 1960s after Pope John XXIII requested that religious communities in the U.S. send members to South America.) I disregarded those requests, as I had no "desire" to go. But lo and behold, when I was in my 40s and thinking about a change in my apostolate, I talked with one of our sisters who was missioned to Peru, and she encouraged me to think about going to South America.

*Words cannot express my gratitude to God, my family,
my religious Community and all those who have
companied me on this journey, marked by so many blessings.*

—Sister Donna Jean Henson

I began to realize that I no longer had the fear of going to a foreign land that I had in my younger years. I volunteered and was sent to Peru in the summer of 1982.

During my first five years in Peru, I taught religion in the elementary schools, visited the sick, and coordinated the Family Catechetical Program in Talara and San Pedro. Following a year of studies at the Theological Institute in Lima, I was appointed director of novices and spent the next nine years preparing young Peruvian women to become Sisters of Charity.

These were some of the most rewarding years of my life as an SCL.

I returned to the U.S. in 1998 and spent the next three years in parish ministry at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Kansas City, Mo. From there, I came to work in the purchasing office at our Mother House while living in Nortonville to care for my Mother. My Mother has since gone to join my Dad in the heavenly kingdom. I continue to serve our sisters and our employees through the purchasing office.

Words cannot express my gratitude to God, my family, my religious Community and all those who have companioned me on this journey, marked by so many blessings.

Sister Mary Kamperschroer

On March 21, 1941 in La Crosse, Wisc., Cornelius and Dorothy Kamperschroer became the proud parents of their first child, Mary Catherine. Twenty months later, Peter arrived. I expressed my "love" for him by pushing his bassinet into the bedroom and closing the door. My sister, Marjorie, was born in 1945, while Dad served in World War II. We moved to Billings, Mont., in January 1948. My youngest brother John was born there in 1951, and our family was complete.

After our arrival in Billings, Mom went to Kate Fratt Memorial School to start me in first grade. Principal Sister



Matilda McInnes told her there was no room. Sister finally took me anyway, as Mom firmly believed that if I couldn't go to Fratt, I couldn't go to school. A public school was not an option for her. It was at Fratt that I first met the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

Though I had wanted to be a sister since sometime in grade school, it wasn't until my senior year that I told my parents. I was accepted by the SCLs on March 21, 1959. What a wonderful birthday present.

The morning of Aug. 21, 1959, I boarded the Burlington train headed for Kansas with several others. Our parents and an army of SCLs saw us off. Sister Clare Huerter, for whom I worked at St. Vincent Hospital, had arranged for my girlfriend and me to spend Saturday night with her family in Marysville, Kan. They met our train in Lincoln, Neb. I still remember the humid heat that hit the two Montanans as we stepped off the air-conditioned train in our black sweaters that morning! Sunday afternoon, our "Kansas parents," Mr. and Mrs. Albert Huerter, drove us to the Mother House and saw us emerge in black skirts, capes and net veils.

On Feb. 24, 1960, I received the habit and name Sister John Therese, after my youngest brother and favorite saint, Therese the Little Flower. A year and a half later, I made first vows, saying, "I vow...one year," but meant forever. My family, including my Grama Blaschke, was present for the occasion. On Aug. 24, I made final vows at Holy Rosary Church, my home parish in Billings, and officially became a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth for life.

As an elementary school teacher for seven and one half years, I taught in Los Angeles (Westchester), Calif.; Topeka, Kan.; Kansas City, Mo; and Butte, Mont. From January 1970 to June 1972, I attended Saint Mary College in Leavenworth to complete my B.S. degree in biology. In 1973, I graduated from Saint John's Hospital School of Medical Technology in Santa Monica, Calif. I worked as a medical technologist at St. James Hospital, Butte, Mont.;

“The Lord said to Abram: ‘Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.’” (Genesis 12:1)

God has continuously guided me to where he wants me to be.

When one door has closed, he has opened others.

*God has blessed my life with the support of my family,
my SCL Community and my friends. For this I am thankful.*

—Sister Mary Kamperschroer

St. Joseph and St. Mary’s Hospitals in Colorado; and Saint John’s in both Santa Monica and Leavenworth. From 1994 to 1996, I studied public relations and communications at Pepperdine University. Since 1996, I have worked at five Sylvan Learning Centers in the Los Angeles area, for two franchise owners as technology director and administrative assistant.

I have loved animals, especially cats, for as long as I can remember. My dad brought home two kittens one day when I was about nine, and I got to choose one of them. Frisky, our family’s first cat, was my constant companion, wearing doll clothes and riding in a doll buggy. When I was a freshman, I bought a blue parakeet. It was mom’s “Hi, Cutie” that he learned to imitate though, not my efforts at “Hello.” I attribute my love of nature to hiking with my brothers and sister around Billings. Photography is my way of capturing special places and fascinating creatures.

“The Lord said to Abram: ‘Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.’” (Genesis 12:1) God has continuously guided me to where he wants me to be. When one door has closed, he has opened others. God has blessed my life with the support of my family, my SCL Community and my friends. For this I am thankful.

Sister Vickie Perkins

On June 27, 1942, Mamie, Ward and big brother Juge welcomed me into their loving family in Dodge City, Kan. My sister, Jane, joined the family five years later. My Dad worked for the Chamber of Commerce in Dodge and later in Great Bend. My Mother was a school teacher before she married.



Tragedy struck our family early. Juge was playing with a neighbor boy when gasoline ignited. Juge tried to put it out, but his clothes caught fire. He lived only a short while, but had a calm and peaceful death at age 10. Although I was only 7, I remember how my parents’ faith saw them through this.

Three years later, my Dad died of a heart attack. This left a huge void in our family, but my Mother’s strength and courage enabled her to move us to Kansas City, Mo., where her family lived.

My Mom became one of the first two lay teachers in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. She started teaching at St. Mary’s, which was staffed by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, and continued to teach with them throughout her career. This was my first association with the SCLs. I later attended Bishop Hogan High School and there met many more SCLs and future SCLs!

Growing up in a single parent family, with my Mom teaching in Catholic schools, was anything but luxurious.

But Janie and I never knew we were poor. My Mom's openness to caring for the needs of others and her faith in God gave us the confidence that we, too, could be and do whatever we set our minds to. We were loved and secure in our family.

One day during my senior year at Hogan, I slipped into the chapel between classes, knelt and said, "OK, God. You win. I'll go." That was how I decided to be a sister.

I entered the Community after high school. My first assignment was St. Daniel the Prophet School in Chicago, Ill. My efforts as an elementary school teacher were not exactly stellar! My fifth graders had scored 4.9 on standardized tests at the end of fourth grade and scored 4.6 at the end of a year with me as their teacher! The next year I was back at the Mother House attending classes at the University of Saint Mary.

After finishing my degree in 1965, I went to Bishop Ward High School where for 11 years I taught math, sponsored the cheerleaders, pep club and more. Summers were spent at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, earning a master's in math education.

My sister Jane married Woody Overton, and they had two wonderful girls. Beth is married to Tom, and they have two great children, Thomas and Olivia. Kathleen is a social worker in Kansas City, Kan.

In 1976, I moved to Hogan to teach math. In the middle of the year, I was challenged by the request to become the principal. Second semester found me teaching part-time and going to school to get my administration certification. From 1977 to 1987, I served as principal of Bishop Hogan High School. I also served two terms (1981 to 1984) on the Community's Personnel Board, as secondary education representative.

Summers often included time at Santa Maria with friends. For 15 years I had enjoyed "my" prayer rock in the middle of the stream there. One summer I sat on my rock, wondering whether it was time to leave Hogan, which I loved so much. I prayed for openness to change. With that, my rock tumbled loose down the stream – and me with it.

So I changed! In 1987, I was appointed associate superintendent for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, working with inner city schools and helping to begin the Central City School Fund. In 1988, I became superintendent.

I resigned this position in 1994 to take a position with the Partnership for Children in Kansas City, Kan. That same year, the Community asked me to consider Mount St. Vincent Home, Denver, Colo., where I served as executive director for the next five years. In 1999, I became director of the Gardner Institute in Kansas City, Kan., providing programs and services for students of inner city nonpublic schools.

In 2005, the Sisters of Charity agreed to sponsor Cristo Rey Kansas City High School, and I was asked to serve as president. Each day, the students end morning assembly with a quote from Mother Xavier, and I join them in saying, "Look forward to the good that is yet to be!"

Sister Constance Phelps

I am because we are.

We are because I am.

—African proverb

This proverb is validated by my experiences and by the numerous people who comprise the "we" in my journey to become who "I am." My parents, Lucille and Kermit, and my sister, Patsy, were the first "we" influence of my early years. Born in Topeka, Kan., we lived near a close extended family. These were the people who loved me, influenced and encouraged me as I developed my sense of self, as well as my relationship with God.

While Patsy and I are cradle Catholics, our parents were converts. So I grew up in a family with a rich, varied spiritual heritage. I remember Grandmother talking with God as she would a close friend. At extended family dinners, each member quoted a scripture passage following the formal blessing. I have fond memories of those dinners: family stories, laughter and always music. All of this gave me a strong sense of security, stability and love.

Dad returned to graduate school after WW II for his degree in clinical psychology. Our home became similar to a house of studies. Graduate students often visited in search of Mother's home cooked meals and lively conversation. This "we" sparked my inquisitiveness.

My family modeled a generosity in assisting others, active in Catholic and civic organizations, volunteering



There are numerous others who have shared in my spiritual journey to self-knowledge and integration. I have drawn from their wisdom and experiences; and they have provided a context for my spiritual quest.

Yes, “I am because we are.” And I thank you.

—Sister Constance Phelps

and advocating for justice. I remember “Papa,” my Grandfather, active behind the scenes preparing for the Brown vs. Board of Education legislation; and Mother participating in the Catholic Interracial Club restaurant “sit-ins.”

Educated by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth elementary through college – Assumption, Hayden, Hogan and Saint Mary – I came to know the sisters not only as teachers. As I volunteered in the sacristy, took music lessons or assisted in their offices, they became significant “we” influences: spiritual directors, mentors and friends.

I have no memory of any one moment of grace or enlightenment that was the vocation “aha” moment for me. Yet the Spirit was moving within. I recall in elementary school that I decided not to use others’ words in prayer, so I began talking with God as I remember Grandmother doing. My inspiration flowed from my connection with others: family, friends, SCLs. They asked, in the words of poet Mary Oliver: “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” And I knew. As I walked and shared with these companions, they revealed the face of God to me. No religious witness or religious education can replace my personal encounter with God.

Following my freshman year at Saint Mary, I entered the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. While I was clear about my call to religious life and to the SCLs, learning the culture of both was challenging. The solace came in joining with other young women with the same aspirations and encountering the entire SCL communal “we.”

My ministry was primarily in higher education at Saint Mary, following six years teaching in Colorado. From Sister Frances Therese Shea’s informing me I would succeed her

in the sociology department, to Sister Mary Janet McGilley’s invitation to join the faculty, my association with administrators, colleagues and students afforded me numerous opportunities and challenges. Many Saint Mary folks were “we” for me during 27 years as professor, dean of students, vice president for student life and interim president.

My experiences as an educator and academic administrator prepared me for leadership roles in other settings, including our SCL Council and the presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Currently, I am a certified process facilitator for groups: religious congregations, community gatherings and boards of trustees in the U.S.

In 1975-1976, I conducted my doctoral research in Ghana, West Africa, as a Fulbright-Hays research fellow. Living in a non-Western culture was a metanoia for me intellectually and spiritually. Firsthand, I experienced the mutual influence of individuals and community. The confluence of the “I” and the “we” gave me deeper insight into community life.

As a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth, my membership is integral to defining who “I am.” My vocation is an unrelenting call, an unending journey, a gift requiring continuous diligence. I live a daily challenge to be who I say I am: a woman religious. Yet, there are numerous others who have shared in my spiritual journey to self-knowledge and integration. I have drawn from their wisdom and experiences; and they have provided a context for my spiritual quest. Yes, “I am because we are.” And I thank you.

Sister Therese Marie Steiner

My story.... It begins with SCL connections.

I was born at St. Vincent's Hospital, Billings, Mont., on May 6, 1940. In June, I was baptized at Little Flower Parish, which I think influenced the choice of my name, Therese Marie. Dad was very diligent about providing for his little family, so we moved to Helena, Mont., for his work and then to Livingston, Mont. My brother, Jim, joined the family on Jan. 1, 1944, so I lost my position as the only child and grandchild on my Dad's side of the family. Tom, Margaret Mary, Fredrick and Myrl were born about every two and a half years after which our family of three boys and three girls was complete.

We moved to Clyde Park, Mont., in the mid-1940s, and Dad built a log cabin/house for us one and a half miles north of Clyde Park. It was a simple life surrounded by beautiful scenery, grandparents – Fred and Agnes Steiner – and a frontier faith community. The Catholic church in Clyde Park was built through my grandparents' efforts along with other charter members of the parish. I realized early on that if something needed to happen at the parish, the families of the area took care of it. That awareness has been the foundation of my strong desire in ministry to resource and sustain small faith communities.

Growing up, I had contact with SCLs through my aunt, Sister Agnes Steiner, and other sisters who accompanied her on home visits or came to teach vacation bible school in Clyde Park. I admired the sisters and their way of life, thinking it was great that some women chose to live that beautiful life. Then, a voice inside would gently say, "You could be one, too."

I attended grade and high school in Clyde Park, graduating in May 1958. I received a scholarship to attend Saint Mary College in Leavenworth, Kan. Attending Saint Mary, I experienced the SCL presence more strongly and was drawn to see if I was called to "be one." The fall of 1959, I "went south" to the novitiate, and it has been an awesome journey.



My ministry journey has been varied and led by providential people and situations. Chapter 1: I started out teaching in grade school for three and a half years, in a different school in a different state each year. Then, I was asked to consider teaching home economics to high school youth and thus began –

Chapter 2: High school teaching at Girls' Central, Butte; Billings Central; and Bishop Ward High School, Kansas City, Kan. These were some of the most growthful years for me relating with students in the classroom and at sports events and Search. After several years of teaching both home economics and religion, I chose to focus on religious studies, receiving a master's degree from St. Thomas University in Houston, Texas, in 1974. That turned out to be the next providential situation because one of my classmates was Father Bill Gianola from the Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyo. Our friendship opened the door to –

Chapter 3: Ministry at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, from 1978 to 1988, a wonderful combination of parish and campus ministry in the Wyoming mountains. My developing interest in holistic health and spirituality prompted a move to Cheyenne –

Chapter 4: Ministry at DePaul Health and Fitness Center, St. Mary's Parish and Holy Trinity Parish. I received the opportunity of a sabbatical at the School of Applied Theology in Berkeley, Calif. This was a very spirit-expanding experience in holistic living and also gave me a chance to spend time with my family. In the fall of 1994, I returned to Cheyenne and ministered at Holy Trinity Parish. I was also able to develop several holistic spirituality programs that were mutually beneficial to me and the participants, forming lasting friendships.

Chapter 5: In 2003, I accepted an invitation to minister at St. Matthew's Parish, Gillette, Wyo., in adult faith formation. That has been a joy-filled experience calling on varied talents and skills in scripture study, small Christian community formation, and women's spirituality, including ecumenical faith sharing.

Now, it is time to begin another chapter. Prompted by various jubilees – the SCL 150th, my own 50th, and a coming decade birthday in 2010, I am completing my full-time ministry in Gillette this spring and moving to Billings, Mont., in the summer. I am looking forward to part-time and volunteer opportunities back where I began life.

Sister Joan Williams

My parents both grew up in Rapid City, S.D., during the years Rushmore Monument was constructed. They had fond memories of their outings in the Black Hills with their friends. My parents were in the same class from first grade till high school graduation. Their school was staffed by the BVM sisters. My parents must have been model students because they had only the fondest memories of the sisters and their school experience. My Dad's family home was across the street from the Cathedral, school and convent, so he was called on as altar server and to do countless jobs and errands for the sisters.



I graduated from school in Greybull, Wyo., and am the oldest in my family. The first seed of a vocation came from a sister who asked our first grade class, "How many of you girls are going to serve God as a sister when you grow up?" I joined the others in waving my hand "yes." Sister informed us, "No, by then you will have changed your mind." I thought, "The other girls might change their minds, but I won't." As I grew up this thought was pushed from my mind, but God was working through my Grandmother. She would have me accompany her to daily Mass and devotions. Her strong relationship with God opened me to his presence and actions in my life. God also worked through our parish priest who had me teaching catechism classes and helping the sisters who came each summer for vacation school.

I believed becoming a sister was what God wanted for me, but I was not sure I could measure up. After much wrestling with the thought, I knew I would have peace only if I left it in God's hands. I applied to the Sisters of Charity. Through the years, I have grown to appreciate what a gift I received when I decided to give it a try. Being an SCL has meant an opportunity to grow, develop and share my gifts in an atmosphere of acceptance and care. My relationship with God has grown out of the strong theological and spiritual foundation the Community has given me.

My missions in the Community have been teaching in our grade schools in Livingston, Billings, Anaconda, Butte, Falls City, Sheridan, Los Angeles and Chicago. It has been a rich experience to have served in so many places and with so many different sisters.

For a couple of summers, I visited patients at DePaul Hospital in Cheyenne, Wyo. The administrator was interested in having more of a sister's presence in the hospital. I was hired to work in the office of the home health department. The director of pastoral care invited me to work in that department. The CPR class gave me skills I have found so helpful working with patients and their families. I am working now with nursing service as a one-on-one with patients who need continual supervision for safety reasons. This service is greatly appreciated by families of patients.

I've been blessed that I have stayed close to my family and been able to watch my nieces and nephews grow up and start their own families. My brother and his wife Shirley still live in Greybull, and their home is the gathering place for the family. My sister Judy and her husband Bob live in Lander and work on the Wind River Reservation. Their children have settled in Wyoming. My youngest sister, Janet, and husband Denny live in Laurel, Mont., with only two of their seven children still at home.

Sister Ruth Ann Hehn is administrator of Holy Trinity Manor, a building with 30 apartments for low-income seniors. I'm called on for all birthday cakes and to prepare meals for their monthly dinners. I love decorating, so another job is to decorate each month.

One of the great joys during my years in Cheyenne has been the time I have spent with the family of Sisters Ruth Ann and Rosella Mary Hehn. Sister Ruth Ann is a coordinator for Cheyenne Interfaith Network for homeless families, so we are very involved in carrying out the SCL commitment to serving the poor.

I am honored to continue the SCL presence in Cheyenne. I constantly meet people who have been touched by the sisters and DePaul Hospital. Through the Community's generosity, we are able to help those who come to us for help.

Beyond All Borders

NGO rep offers insights into UN, her role



Sister Marie de Paul Combo (left) hosted and introduced Sister Caroljean Willie who discussed her role as NGO representative of the Charity Federation.

In a presentation at the Mother House in early April, hosted by the SCL Social Justice Committee, Sister Caroljean Willie, SC, discussed her role as the non-governmental organization (NGO) representative at the United Nations (UN) for the Sisters of Charity Federation.

In this capacity, she represents 16 congregations of approximately 4,000 Sisters of Charity across 30 countries. Sister Caroljean is a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati.

She said that NGOs “speak for the people,” particularly for those who are marginalized. They use their voices to bring the voices of those living in poverty to policy discussions. With her doctorate in multicultural education, Sister Caroljean added that she “looks at everything through the lens of culture.”

NGOs participate in the work of the UN primarily through committee involvement. They work behind the scenes and meet with ambassadors and other government personnel to put forth a people-centered agenda. They write policy recommendations and interventions, provide education, and host events parallel to their committee work to showcase best practices. They work with governments and meet with people to develop opportunities to effect systemic and sustainable change. NGOs recommend something as subtle yet powerfully significant as a change in language to talk about “people who live in poverty” instead of calling these persons “the poor.”

Sister Caroljean serves on the Committee on Social Development that evolved from the 1995 World Summit on Social Development. This committee has promoted people-centered development and sponsored education sessions on migration, poverty, prisons, social development, indigenous issues, and other topics. A new task force of the committee will examine climate change and its effect on those living in poverty. The Charity Federation NGO representative also is on the Committee on Migration.

Sister Caroljean mentioned that her office offers internships, issues monthly action alerts and publishes a quarterly newsletter. She is interested in receiving names of persons passionate about specific issues and will keep them informed as materials develop.

As she continues to meet with sisters in the Charity Federation, Sister Caroljean said she also is looking for ways to bring people together to explore opportunities for collective engagement and to further expand the sphere of influence through partnering with the wider Vincentian family. For more information about the NGO, visit www.sisters-of-charity-federation.org and click on NGO.

Trip to Sierra Leone a 'Holy Week retreat'



A crowd of people gathered outside the clinic in Makeni to await services provided by the *Lighthouse Medical Mission Group*.



Sister Marie Madeleine Shonka was right at home ministering through nursing care and personal attention as she volunteered in the clinic in Sierra Leone. She is pictured with a young man who left the clinic with medications and a new pair of shoes.

After years of service in health care administration and fund development, Sister Marie Madeleine Shonka seized the chance of a lifetime to don surgical scrubs during a spring mission trip to Sierra Leone, Africa. She spent 10 days in a clinic in Makeni where she used her nursing skills to administer antibiotics, clean wounds, and run pregnancy and blood tests. She also had the opportunity to visit two hospitals, and encountered many "kind and loving people" among the caregivers and the people of Sierra Leone.

Earlier this year, Sister Marie Madeleine met with Sister Sue Miller, Community director, to discuss her plans for the future. Sister Marie Madeleine mentioned that her next ministry might be in social service or international relief. Sister Sue asked if she had ever considered work in Africa.

Sister Marie Madeleine responded that she had never experienced a third world country. Not long after, she coincidentally and providentially ran into Dr. Robert Hamilton, a pediatrician at Saint John's Health Center, Santa Monica, Calif. He is the founder of the *Lighthouse Medical Mission Group*, which provides medical care in Africa twice a year. From April 2 through 11, sister traveled to Sierra Leone with his group and 38 other volunteers.

One of the first things Dr. Hamilton did was take Sister Marie Madeleine to the local hospital in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital. Saint John's has plans to send equipment and supplies to various hospitals and clinics when the last standing building of the original Santa Monica facility is razed in September of this year. When sister noted the lack of electricity and the small patient rooms in the Freetown facility, she knew that

hospital beds and major equipment would not meet care delivery needs; however, supplies and medications continue to be a high priority.

While Sierra Leone has rich natural resources, it remains one of the poorest countries in Africa. The people suffer from malnutrition, live in shacks, and face diseases including malaria, meningitis, typhoid fever, polio and AIDS. The water is not potable. Yet, while they live in dire poverty, Sister Marie Madeleine said, "They were among the happiest people I have ever seen."

In Lunsar, Sister Marie Madeleine visited a second hospital, this one operated by the Brothers of Saint John of God. The rooms were small but clean, and patients enjoyed a patio area.

Sister Marie Madeleine described this mission trip as "a great Holy Week retreat" as she looks forward to future Community assignments.

Addressing ‘broken immigration system’

Stating that we need a solution that reflects fairness, justice and getting things done, Janet Murguia, president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), discussed the need for comprehensive immigration reform in remarks at the University of Saint Mary in mid-April. La Raza is the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States.

Sharing the story of her own parents who came to the U.S. from Mexico 50 years ago, Janet said, “I worry that the American dream may not be within the reach of [Latino] families today.” She characterized the failure to pass comprehensive legislative reform as “a crazy quilt of patchwork efforts at the state and national levels” and said that the federal emphasis on enforcement cut off the avenue for people to enter the country legally. She described high profile raids and deportation of parents as having devastating consequences on families. Janet said that 300,000 U.S. citizen children have been impacted by the deportation of their non-citizen parents.



Janet Murguia (left) acknowledged Sister Peter Parry and other SCL friends who influenced her and her siblings during their formative years in Kansas City, Kan.

Because of a rise in hate crimes, the National Council of La Raza has begun a “Stop the Hate” campaign. Last November after the brutal beating and death of an immigrant, the Council under Janet’s leadership joined seven other civil rights organizations to call attention to the rise in hate crimes and hate rhetoric.

Janet described the debate about immigration reform as one “about who we are as a country,” and continued, “I hope that historians 50 years from now will say that we stood up and wrote a positive chapter in our nation’s history. We have the chance, and this is our moment.”

Janet dedicated her remarks to Sisters Jeanne Marie Jette and Peter Parry and acknowledged the work of Sister Therese Bangert. She spoke at USM as a guest of the Lawrence D. Starr Global Studies Institute.

Components outlined for comprehensive reform

Janet Murguia, La Raza CEO, advocated that seven points be part of comprehensive immigration reform:

- ▶ Effective policing of borders.
- ▶ Crackdown on “unscrupulous” employers through implementation of a sound verification system.
- ▶ Development of an identified path to legal status.
- ▶ Reduction of the separation of families.
- ▶ Consideration of how the U.S. will admit workers to meet future work force needs.
- ▶ Efficient measures that protect civil rights and keep the nation safe.
- ▶ Addressing the root causes of immigration in the sending countries.

Mother House remembers Postville raid

*On May 12,
the Mother House
community remembered
the immigration raid
that occurred a year ago
in Postville, Iowa.*

In solidarity with all who suffered and who are suffering, the sisters observed the anniversary by ringing the chapel bells at 9:50 a.m. (the raid had begun at 10:00 a.m.). The sisters joined in prayers at the daily Eucharist in Ross Chapel with the prayer vigil being held in Postville and vigils across the nation (including one in Kansas City, Mo.). They offered prayers for all impacted by the raid and for immigration reform in the country.

On May 12, 2008, Immigrants Custom Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested 389 people at Agriprocessors, the kosher meat packing plant in Postville. At the time, this was the largest raid in U.S. history. Seventy-five percent of the plant's employees were

undocumented workers who lacked protection. The process for trying detained workers was described as hasty and unfair. Translators did not inform workers of their full charges, and lawyers had only a few hours to try to help the workers, who were tried in groups at the local cattle fairground. The plant could not replace all the detained workers and closed, leaving even more persons unemployed.

St. Bridget's Catholic Church opened its doors to families broken up by the raid. Members of churches and Jewish synagogues from surrounding cities and states traveled to protest the injustices. Realizing the need for comprehensive immigration reform, legislators have questioned prosecutions of the 389 detained persons.

For more information/prayers, visit www.postvillestbridget.org.



Among SCLs participating in the Good Friday Way of the Cross in Kansas City, Mo., were (left to right) Sisters Vicki Lichtenauer, Mary Rachel Flynn and Pat Johannsen. The outdoor "reflection on the modern-day suffering of the Body of Christ" took participants on a pilgrimage to different locations with prayers based on social justice themes. Holy Family Catholic Worker House coordinated the prayer experience.

Mutual interests spark friendship

This is a story about friendship – a friendship that has spanned 45 years; a friendship in which each person has been there when the other has had a need; a friendship that began based on common interests and that has continued because of deep respect.

Sisters Ann Donovan and Ann Victoria Garcia became acquainted at the Mother House in 1964. Sister Ann was secretary to Mother Leo Frances Ryan; Sister Ann Victoria taught in Kansas City, Mo., during the school year but worked at the Mother House in the summertime. The two sisters shared interests in

music and in French; those mutual interests sparked their friendship.

“She made me what I am today,” Sister Ann Victoria commented.

“Don’t blame me!” Sister Ann teased.

Originally from Boston, Sister Ann resisted efforts of her Father and friends, all of whom encouraged her to become a sister. Eventually, she knew that this was the life she would follow. She wrote a priest acquaintance in the Midwest and asked if he would recommend any religious communities. Following his suggestion, she visited the SCL Mother House in April 1953. “The minute I entered the door, I knew I was coming back,” Sister Ann recalled.

Sister Ann Victoria was from Kansas City, Mo., where her family owned a restaurant. She came from a family that was musically talented. As a toddler, she didn’t miss a step when performing a Mexican dance with one of her brothers before a large gathering. She said that seeing the “Song of Bernadette” inspired her to want to become a sister. She entered the Community in 1960.

The two friends have never been missioned together. Sister Ann taught briefly and has spent most of her years as a secretary – her profession before she joined the SCLs, responding to a late vocation. Today, Sister Ann is secretary to Sister Lucy Walter, Mother House coordinator. Sister Ann Victoria was a teacher throughout her ministry, coaching students to winning awards for choral performances and teaching French and Spanish. She performed with the Remnants, the SCL band, and remains gifted whether playing the classical guitar, piano or accordion.

Over the years, the two SCLs adopted one another’s families. They admit to disagreeing periodically, but their friendship has outlasted any differences. Sharing their love of music, they continue to attend most recitals at the University of Saint Mary and enjoy plays and musicals.



Sister Ann Victoria Garcia played an original composition while Sister Ann Donovan admired her friend’s musical talent.

Re-markings

Women & Spirit exhibit opens

"Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America," an exhibit on the rich history and contributions of Catholic sisters in the United States, opened in the Cincinnati Museum Center on May 16.



Sisters Constance Phelps (left) and Rita McGinnis at the grand opening of the Women & Spirit exhibit where the harp brought to Leavenworth in 1858 is on display.

Through photographs, artifacts and documentary material drawn from the archives of many congregations, this exhibit tells how sisters played a vital role in shaping American life from before the earliest days of the republic and throughout its history. Women & Spirit is a project of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in association with Museum Center, which will tour the exhibition nationally.

Sister Constance Phelps has been a member of the LCWR History Committee coordinating development of the exhibit. It is fully-funded for a three-year tour and includes supporting education materials as well as retail items.

The exhibit is booked in Cincinnati, Ohio, through Aug. 30. It then will travel to the following locations (with other dates to be announced in the future):

- **The Women's Museum:**
An Institute for the Future
Dallas, Tex.
September-December 2009
- **Smithsonian-International Gallery**
in the Dillon Ripley Center
Washington, D.C.
January-April 2010
- **Statue of Liberty**
National Monument/Ellis Island
Immigration Museum
New York, N.Y.
September-December 2010
- **Mississippi River Museum**
Dubuque, Iowa
February-April 2011

For more information and for updates on the exhibit schedule, visit www.womenandspirit.org.

U.S. House of Representatives honors Catholic women religious

On May 14, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur of Ohio introduced a resolution into the U.S. House of Representatives honoring the historic contributions of Catholic women religious. The resolution "honors and commends Catholic sisters for their humble service and courageous sacrifice throughout the history of this nation; and supports the goals of the Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America Traveling Exhibit, a project sponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in association with Cincinnati Museum Center and established to recognize the historical contributions of Catholic sisters in the United States."

Rep. Kaptur noted, "In continued celebration of the women who have shaped our lives and cultivated our potential, I stand to recognize the Catholic sisters not only for the personal impact they have had within our own lives, but for the extraordinary contributions they have made to the history of the United States."

‘Way of Elizabeth’ informs, inspires

by Sister Nancy Bauman
SCL Councilor and Novice Director

Every novitiate year, our novices have gone to the “Way of Elizabeth” which is sponsored by the Charity Federation. This year, our novice, Sister Rejane Cytacki, along with Sisters Margaret Hogan, Mary Pat Johnson, Roberta O’Leary and myself joined other sisters in the Charity Federation for the Bicentennial Retreat Pilgrimage in Emmitsburg, Md. Fifty-three sisters from various congregations of the Federation participated and walked in the footsteps of Elizabeth Ann Seton.



Walking the way of Elizabeth were (left to right) Sisters Roberta O’Leary, Mary Pat Johnson, Margaret Hogan, Nancy Bauman and Rejane Cytacki. They are pictured in the Sulpician seminary chapel on Paca Street in Baltimore, Md., where Elizabeth Ann Seton made her first vows.

During our days on Elizabeth Ann’s holy ground, we had a PowerPoint tour of her time in New York where she lived with her husband William Magee Seton and her five children. We followed Elizabeth as she traveled to Italy where her husband died of tuberculosis and where she met the Filicchi family that was very instrumental in her conversion to Catholicism. By bus, we visited her home and school in Baltimore where Elizabeth Ann started the first Catholic school for girls in 1808. We toured her homes in Emmitsburg – the Stone House and later the White House where Sisters of Charity who were founded in 1809 lived and took in students.

Sisters Regina Bechtle, Kathleen Flanagan and Judy Metz gave presentations on Elizabeth Ann’s life, spirituality and her legacy. We had time to walk and reflect on her holy ground of Emmitsburg. We also heard about the history and stories of the Charity congregations that were a part of this retreat pilgrimage: sisters from St. John, New Brunswick; Halifax, Nova Scotia; New York, N.Y; Cincinnati, Ohio; Greensburg, Penn.; Nazareth, Ken.; Convent Station, N.J.; and, of course, Leavenworth.

We reflected upon Elizabeth’s words and prayers from her journals and letters to family, friends and church members. We got to know her as an Episcopalian woman, wife, mother, widow, convert, friend, foundress and saint.

There is much more that we could tell you about our time with Elizabeth Ann Seton. If you would like to learn more about her life and see the places of her holy ground, a DVD and a video are available: *Baltimore Blessed: The Story of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton* (DVD); *A Time for Miracles* (video). To check out either of these, please contact Sandi Crisp at scrisp@scls.org or 913-758-6539.

HCL visits SCL ministries

While in Leavenworth for the April 2009 meeting of the Chapter Planning Committee, Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales visited SCLs at their ministries to gain insights into how they instill and share the charism among employees and volunteers.

Hermana Laura, who is relatively new to her assignment as director of the St. Vincent Center in Piura, Peru, was seeking presentations, information and materials to introduce employees and volunteers to the spirit of Vincent, Louise and Mother Xavier.

She met with Sister Jennifer Gordon at Providence Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan., and learned about employee tours of the Mother House to gain a sense of the SCL heritage. She is looking forward to receiving prayer services that Sister Jen uses. Hermana Laura plans to translate the “Praying with the History” and “The Three Good Words” booklets developed by the SCLAs.

At Duchesne Clinic, also in Kansas City, Kan., she spoke with Sister Helen Bristow about how she shares spirituality with staff. She met a student from Cristo Rey Kansas City who works at Duchesne and also other student interns who were receiving clinical experience at the clinic. The internship or practicum opportunity appealed to Hermana Laura as something to explore for St. Vincent Center. The Center in Piura offers multiple services including education, a library, the human rights office and health programs. The latter are available for those unable to pay and include traditional medical services, reflexology, a pharmacy and physical therapy.



Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales (right) appreciated learning about record-keeping at Duchesne Clinic, Kansas City, Kan., as explained by Sister Helen Bristow (left) and Maria Ontiveros (center).

Hermana Laura also valued the time that she spent with Sister Kevin Marie Flynn who discussed her AIDS ministry. Hermana Laura noted how volunteers demonstrated their concern for persons with AIDS with whom they worked. She is interested in this outreach as

another service to be developed at St. Vincent Center.

Of her tour and visits with SCLs, Hermana Laura observed, “I was most impressed with the sensitivity of the sisters for persons living in poverty and the desire of those with whom they serve to work with the poor.”

National recognition for living the Vincentian spirit

While Gayle Johnson has belonged to the Ladies of Charity of Metropolitan Kansas City for less than 10 years, Vincentian values and actions are core to her very being. Furthermore, Gayle is a leader through and through as demonstrated by her rapid ascent to board positions with the local Ladies of Charity association and at regional and national levels.



Gayle Johnson, Leawood, Kan., was the recipient of a Seton Legacy of Charity Bicentennial Medal.

For her good works and her spirit of charity, Gayle received the Seton Legacy of Charity Bicentennial Medal presented on May 23 at a special event in Emmitsburg, Md. Sister Charlotte White, spiritual moderator of Kansas City's Ladies of Charity association, nominated Gayle for this recognition. Sister Loretto Marie Colwell, executive director of Seton Center, Kansas City, Mo., attended the event where Gayle was honored.

"I am impressed by Gayle's constant looking at ways to make a difference at the service level," Sister Charlotte said, "and also at the systemic level."

Gayle believes that "the Vincentian family is about systemic change" and that it's important to listen and understand needs and then to work with people to effect sustainable change. Toward that end, she has coordinated two conferences sponsored by the Ladies of Charity in the Greater Kansas City Area. The 2007 conference dealt with poverty; the 2008 session covered the topic of marginalized women in today's society. She also developed a literacy program to provide tutoring and volunteer work in libraries of Catholic schools.

Gayle's story began in Leavenworth, Kan., with her birth at Saint John Hospital. Her family moved to Kansas City, Mo., where she attended high

school and college. She double majored in chemistry and math with the intention of working for a research organization. Marriage and raising a family intervened. Meanwhile, Gayle substitute taught and eventually earned a master's in special education. She never taught youth with special needs, but she said that the background prepared her to work with kids with all kinds of problems, for the subsequent 25 years she spent as a high school teacher of math and computer science.

Interwoven throughout Gayle's story – from her family upbringing and high school years of volunteering, through college and her professional

career – is the sense that it's important to give back, to volunteer and to contribute to making the world a better place. She appreciates that the Ladies of Charity have hands-on involvement and that the organization fosters spiritual formation of its members.

Gayle was president of the Kansas City Ladies of Charity from 2006-2007. She currently serves as a vice president of the national board.

SCL INVOLVEMENT WITH LADIES CHARITY

When the Daughters of Charity left the Kansas City area, the door opened for SCL involvement with the local association of the Ladies of Charity. Gayle Johnson attended a St. Vincent's Day Mass in Kansas City, Kan., where Sister Charlotte White gave the reflection. Gayle approached Sister Charlotte about serving as spiritual moderator of the group. Sister Charlotte continues to serve in that capacity and regularly attends board meetings and activities.

Typical of their practice, the Ladies in the Kansas City area support organizations associated with the Vincentian charism. In the metropolitan area they give financial and/or volunteer support to Duchesne Clinic, Kansas City, Kan.; Seton Center, Kansas City, Mo.; and the Villa St. Francis, Olathe, Kan.

The Ladies of Charity began in Kansas City with their charter in 1952 as an Auxiliary of St. Anthony's "baby home." After this orphanage closed, the Ladies were instrumental in the 1969 founding of Seton Center. In 1975, the organization changed its name to the Ladies of Charity of Metropolitan Kansas City.

Marian pilgrimage close to home

Sister Mary Jane Schmitz has brought ingenuity, creativity and spirituality together to involve fourth grade students of Xavier Elementary School in a popular Marian pilgrimage very close to home in Leavenworth, Kan. Sister is director of mission at the school and explained that the various apparitions of Mary are included in the fourth grade curriculum.

Now in her sixth year at Xavier, she originally began the pilgrimage concept by creating her own reproductions of the apparitions and displaying them in Immaculate Conception

*Early in the school year,
the students start asking when they
get to go on the pilgrimage.*

— Sister Mary Jane Schmitz

Church. “It was very successful, but the setting up and taking down were quite labor intensive,” Sister Mary Jane recalled. “Then the inspiration came – why not take the students to the Mother House and USM – much more effective and a lot less work!”



At one of the stops on the Marian pilgrimage at the Mother House, Sister Ann Barton explained the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the students. Sister Mary Jane Schmitz, who organized the pilgrimage, has her back to the camera at left.

As a result, each year the fourth-graders make a pilgrimage to the Marian sites on the SCL campus. Sister said that the students love it and that word gets around. “Early in the school year, the students start asking when they get to go on the pilgrimage,” Sister Mary Jane added. “I always have a few parents who accompany us, and they are just as interested, if not more so than the children.”



Sister Mary Jane Schmitz

At the Mother House and university, Sister Mary Jane invites other SCLs to assist. This year, Sister Ann Barton was tour guide at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a large picture in a Mother House hallway. Students were invited to pray the “Hail Mary” in Spanish. The pilgrimage progressed to the front parlor where Sister Regina Erbacher discussed the apparition in Portugal as represented by the large statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the three children to whom she appeared.

Inclement weather the day of the pilgrimage prevented a visit to the outdoor grotto and information about Our Lady of Lourdes to have been presented by Sister Elizabeth Skalicky. Students remained inside and went first to the side chapel of Annunciation Chapel and then made their way to the Mary Chapel in the USM Mead Hall. There Sister Barbara Sellers talked about St. Catherine Laboure and the miraculous medal.

The pilgrimage ended on the fourth floor of Saint Mary Hall where Sister Mary Jane recounted Mary’s apparition on “this very spot.” In 1882, a tornado toppled the tower of St. Mary’s Academy and killed four children. A Marian shrine was placed where the children and the sisters with them reported that they saw the image of Mary as they prayed.

Students learn and pray at each of the Marian shrines along the pilgrimage. “Besides being an effective teaching tool,” Sister Mary Jane said, “it is fun and creates good memories. The children get to visit my home and get to know a little more about my life. I am always looking for opportunities to bring students to both the Mother House and the USM campus.”

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.

'Everyday hero' recognition

Her tireless work serving foster children earned **Sister Michael Delores Allegri** recognition by the Kempe Center and 7 News in Denver, Colo., as the "Everyday hero" for the month of April 2009, national child abuse prevention month. Sister Michael Delores volunteers at Kempe Center, an organization that provides innovative programs that treat abused children (from birth to age 18), trains medical professionals, and researches new treatment methods to help and heal the children. Over the past 10 years, Sister Michael Delores has served as a foster parent for 46 children – most of whom have been abused or neglected.



"Sister Michael is always the person who steps up to the plate and says, 'Give that little person to me, because I believe I can help,'" said Terri James-Banks, program director, Kempe Center.

"These are kids who have been hurt. They have been traumatized by no fault of their own. And unless we get in there and show them and help them and teach them – this is not the way they're going to have to live their lives forever – their lives would not change. So, we can turn lives around for kids," said Sister Michael Delores.

SCLs among 'BeFrienders' receiving award

Honored for their service, Providence and Saint John BeFrienders paused from their good works for a group photo. Back row, standing, left to right: Sister Irene Skeehan, Dionne Boyice, Janice Williams, Josie Sandoval, Sister Jennifer Gordon; middle row, seated, left to right: Karen Stokes-Tyiska, Kimberly Petterson; front row, seated, left to right: Sisters Mary Geraldine Yelich and Peg Driscoll. Not pictured: Sister Peter Parry.



Five SCLs were among representatives of the BeFriender Ministry recognized by Providence Medical Center and Saint John Hospital in April when they received the Core Value Award for Respect. This team serves both Kansas City area hospitals by ministering to patients. During 2008, team members visited more than 500 patients at the hospitals to assure that their needs were being met. SCL BeFrienders include **Sisters Peg Driscoll, Jennifer Gordon, Peter Parry, Irene Skeehan and Mary Geraldine Yelich.**

The ministry extends a caring, listening presence to patients who need a little extra support. It is a program of the hospitals' spiritual care department.

Sister conducts 'master class' for musicians

Drawing on her extensive experience in music ministry and liturgical formation, **Sister Mary Jo Quinn** conducted a "reading session" for Catholic musicians on May 2 in Bozeman, Mont. Oregon Catholic Press, Sister Mary Jo's previous employer, hosted the session. Sister Mary Jo is a former member of the National Association of Pastoral Ministry (NPM) board of directors and newly elected to the board of the Directors of Music Ministry Division of NPM. She has published articles focused on the challenges pastoral musicians face when attempting to enable the voice of the assembly. Sister Mary Jo is a pastoral associate for the Blessed Trinity Catholic Community, Missoula, Mont.



Sister Jean honored for volunteer service

Sister Jean Highberger was honored as Duchesne Clinic volunteer of the year during the April 14 program hosted by the United Way of Wyandotte County, Kan. Her volunteer work with the medication assistance program of the Kansas City, Kan., clinic merited the recognition. The program seeks out medications on behalf of patients through the pharmaceutical company patient assistance program. Sister Jean has developed a record-keeping template to track donated medications and their dollar value. The local newspaper stated, "Her commitment to patients is unwavering, and she always goes the extra mile to make sure that [clinic] patients get the medicine they need."



Founders' Award to SCLA

The Providence and Saint John Foundation presented its Founders Award to **Therese Horvat, SCLA**, on April 18 during the hospitals' gala in Kansas City, Kan. This recognition goes to a person who demonstrates the spirit of Mother Xavier Ross and the Sisters of Charity. Therese served as vice president of planning and community relations for Providence and Saint John and left the hospitals after 23 years of service to form her own consulting company. She currently serves as SCL communications director, writes for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System, and works with other clients in the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area on communication and strategic planning projects.



Spring busy for Sister Mary Laura

At the Wizards' soccer game, special guests enjoyed tickets compliments of Sister Mary Laura Huddleston's intercession.

Front row, Antonia Barragan and Sister Mary Laura; back row, left to right, young Javier with Javier Loreda, D.D.S., his Father; Howard Rosenthal, M.D.; and Miguel Jimenez. Dr. Loreda provided dental services for Miguel.



It's been a busy and productive spring for **Sister Mary Laura Huddleston** as she reached out to help a young man in need of medical assistance, as well as earned recognition for her years of volunteering with the American Royal.

Last November, Antonia Barragan sought Sister Mary Laura's help in obtaining possible financial assistance for her son, Miguel. Through the Sisters of Charity financial assistance fund, Sister Mary Laura was able to respond to this request.

Subsequently, she arranged treatment for Miguel who had multiple tumors on his leg including a very large tumor behind his knee. Sister coordinated with a friend, Howard G. Rosenthal, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon. As a medical record administrator, Sister Mary Laura had worked with Dr. Rosenthal when he was on the medical staff at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Currently, Dr. Rosenthal is medical director of the Mid-America Sarcoma Institute in Overland Park, Kan. He has over 15 years of experience treating patients with tumors of the bone and soft tissues.

Through Dr. Rosenthal's efforts and those of WyJoCare, a program of the Medical Society of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties that arranges donated specialty care, Miguel had surgery followed by intensive physical therapy. As a result, just five months later, Miguel is pain-free and able to play soccer with his friends.

Leading up to the surgical procedure at Menorah Medical Center, Overland Park, Miguel asked Sister Mary Laura, "Will I be able to play soccer?" That led her to make another connection – this one with the Kansas City Wizards' soccer team. Sister Mary Laura received tickets to the May 6 game in Kansas City, Kan., where Miguel, his family, Dr. Rosenthal and others who were influential in Miguel's care and recovery attended the soccer game.

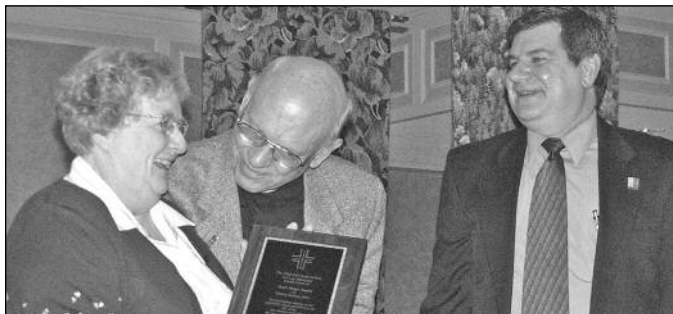
Miguel and his surgeon were on the soccer field wearing personalized Wizards' jerseys for pre-game festivities. There were interviews with television stations along with a photo session. Miguel kicked the first ball of the game and met the Wizards' captain.

• • •

Two days later, on May 8, Sister Mary Laura received special recognition for her volunteer service and chaplain role at Kansas City's American Royal. She received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the organization's annual volunteer banquet. This is the highest award the American Royal presents.

The presentation noted that Sister Mary Laura has served in many capacities through the years: greeting exhibitors and providing hospitality to visitors; assisting with check-in of out-of-town exhibitors; taking tickets and making phone calls; as archivist, collecting and logging news clippings; and her favorite position, "chaplain of the American Royal," offering assistance as appropriate, leading prayers at meetings and blessing the animals, riders and performers.

First 'Juan Diego Award' to Sister Eileen Hurley



Sister Eileen Hurley received congratulations from Rev. Joseph Merkt and Frank Villaronga, NALM board members.

As previewed in the Spring 2009 *Voices of Charity*, the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) presented its first Juan Diego Award to **Sister Eileen Hurley**, director of lay ministry, Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, Mont. This award honored Sister Eileen's outstanding witness to the spirit and values embodied in the life of the lay minister, Juan Diego, the first saint of the Americas.

Sister Eileen's ministry in the diocesan office of lay ministry takes her on-the-road throughout eastern Montana sharing faith, teaching, giving workshops and retreats, and overseeing four lay ministry training programs. She is currently serving on the boards of the Montana Catholic Conference, Montana Catholic Social Services, and St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings.

The award was presented on May 29 at NALM's annual conference in St. Paul, Minn. The National Association for Lay Ministry is a professional organization that supports, educates and advocates for lay ministers and promotes the development of lay ministry in the Catholic Church. Formed in 1981, it currently has 1,300 members serving across the country.

St. Labre marks 125th anniversary



Students on the campus of St. Labre with the teepee church/chapel in the background.

St. Labre Indian School, Ashland, Mont., is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. The school offers preschool through high school education for Crow and Northern Cheyenne children. Combined enrollment at all three St. Labre campuses is almost 800 children. Sister Bernadette Helfert is director of mission and ministry for the school.

In addition to traditional classroom experiences, St. Labre places great importance on Native American culture and tradition. This includes classes in language, culture, literature, history and tribal government. The school combines education, spirituality and Native American culture to educate the whole child. For more information, visit www.stlabre.org.

Susan Nelson awarded 'Sullivan Award'



Susan Nelson (left) accepted the Sullivan Award and congratulatory wishes from Sister Diane Steele, USM president.

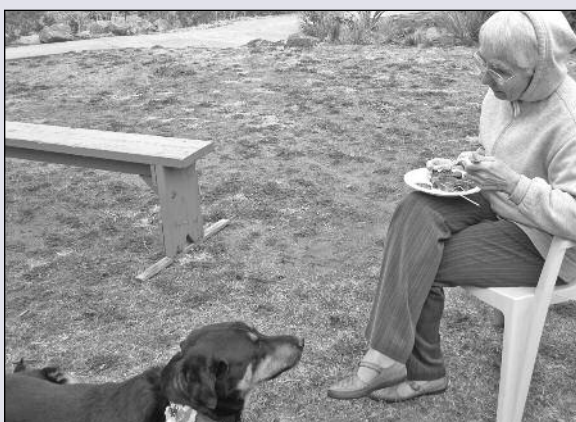
Professor Susan Nelson, director of the University of Saint Mary art program, received the Sullivan Award for Teaching Excellence at the spring convocation and honors ceremony on April 28 in Leavenworth, Kan. The award plus \$1,000 go to a full-time faculty member who has made a distinct difference in the teaching climate at USM. The Sullivan Award was created in 1990 and named for the late Sister Mary Louis Sullivan, former academic dean. The winner is nominated by students, faculty and staff. Susan earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan.

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

SCL PHOTO GALLERY



Chapter planning: During the first meeting of the SCL Chapter Planning Committee, participants took a break for a photo session. Standing (left to right): Sisters Peg Johnson (recording secretary), Kathleen Wood, Roberta O'Leary, Bernadette Helfert, Marianna Bauder (SCL Council liaison), Carmelita Murphy, OP (facilitator), and Laura Rumiche Morales; seated: Sisters Donna Jean Henson (translator), Jennifer Gordon, Eileen Haynes and Elizabeth Youngs.



A sabbatical moment: Sister Marie Bernard Martin and Obo enjoyed sabbatical at Sangre de Cristo Center in Santa Fe, N.M.



Sister Veronica Marie Brost retained the twinkle in her eyes on the celebration of her 104th birthday on March 25.

Regional treasurers of the Region 13 Conference of Religious Treasurers (CORT) met at Marillac Center, Leavenworth, Kan., May 2-5, hosted by Sister Katherine Franchett. Pictured front row, left to right, Sister Judith Lindell, OP, and Sister Markita Haeffling, OP, Dominican Sisters, Great Bend, Kan.; Sister Catherine Martinez, OSB, St. Joseph Monastery, Tulsa, Okla.; Margaret Ann Kearns, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth; Sister Valarie Stark, OSB, Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Clyde, Mo.; Sister Lou Whipple, OSB, Benedictine Sisters, Atchison, Kan.; Sister Katherine Franchett, SCLs; back row, left to right: Sister Mary Ellen Reichert, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Savannah, Mo.; Sister Rose Marie Stallbaumer, OSB, Benedictine Sisters, Atchison, Kan.; and Sister Sue Artone Fricke, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis, Denver, Colo.



LOCAL JUBILARIANS CELEBRATE AT MOTHER HOUSE

With a concentration of SCLs marking major anniversaries of their religious profession living at the Mother House, a celebration on April 25 highlighted the service of these sisters. Prayer and the Eucharist in Ross Chapel preceded a luncheon in the Mother House dining room.

Guests of honor were recognized with a musical tribute and their favorite flowers.



Sister Frances Russell, 60th anniversary jubilarian, offered reflections during the Mass in Ross Chapel.



Sister Patricia Murry presented roses to Sister Ann Cecile DeDonder who is marking her 70th anniversary. As guests sang "We've grown accustomed to your face," Sister Jean Marian Riling framed the honoree for recognition and the presentation of the sister's favorite floral bouquet. Sister Georgeanne Desch, another 70th anniversary honoree, had just received her flowers.



Sister Ann Lucia Apodaca (left) with Sister Mary Marcianna Trujillo who is marking her 60th anniversary.



Sixty years an SCL, Sister Agnes Ann Kneib at the Mother House celebration.

Heart of the Matter

Health ministry serves SCLs at Mother House

With the goal of retaining the personal independence of sisters as they age and serving them as their health declines, the SCL senior services program strives to offer person-centered and person-respected care.

The wellness/assisted living unit is located on the second floor of the Mother House. In Ross Hall, assisted living and skilled nursing care are available for sisters.

Sister Marianna Bauder, the SCL councilor who oversees the health care dimension of services, said there is ongoing dialogue with the sisters to meet their needs and with staff to enhance the workplace environment. For example, based on recent feedback, there are plans to enlarge the wellness unit with more services and to designate additional rooms for assisted living. At staff's request, shifts transitioned from eight to 12 hours.

With feedback from sisters, staff involvement and input from a consulting group, SCL senior services undergo a process of continuous improvement. For the past nine years, the SCL program has had a relationship with Via Christi Senior Services. Via Christi operates 17 nursing facilities. Sister Marianna explained that as a private facility, the SCL senior services program does not participate in state visits for licensure. "Because we want to maintain high standards," Sister Marianna said, "we appreciate the objectivity and expertise that Via Christi brings as their staff reviews and surveys our program."

Maintaining those high standards and ensuring a person-centered environment year-round is the responsibility of Beverly

Armstrong, R.N., B.S.N., director of health and wellness, and of the staff that reports to her. Pat Moulden, R.N., B.S.N., is head nurse of the wellness unit; Ken Jordan, R.N., Ross Hall head nurse; and Scott Magner, R.P.T., director, physical therapy.

Among duties on the wellness unit, Pat and an L.P.N. assist sisters during weekdays by ordering medications and arranging medication planners; making rounds twice daily; scheduling doctors' appointments; and facilitating mental exercises to preserve cognitive function. As needed, they also assist sisters on the third and fourth floors of the Mother House with health issues.

In Ross Hall, Ken oversees staff that provides around-the-clock services for the three floors and 52 private rooms. There are 18 L.P.N.s, one R.N. in addition to Ken, and 30 nurses' aides. Both head nurses collaborate with the physical therapy department to connect sisters with beneficial services such as exercise equipment, two whirlpools and the exercise swimming pool. An internal medicine physician makes monthly rounds of Ross Hall, and a podiatrist visits the nursing center once every three months.

The sisters have the opportunity for daily Mass, activities and outings, movies and visits with other SCLs. "We make every effort to be respectful of the sisters," Beverly said. "This is their home."

In turn, the staff appreciates that the sisters take a special interest in their lives.



Providing for the health and wellness of SCLs is the priority of (left to right) Pat Moulden, Ken Jordan and Beverly Armstrong and their staff.



Sister Helen Forge visited the second floor wellness unit for a blood pressure check given by Pat Moulden.

Labor of love begets love

There's no doubt about it: Mariella Magee is loved. Loved by her parents. Loved by her two sisters, Morgan, 11, and Marianna, 7. Loved, happy, curly-headed and brimming with vitality as she toddles around the Kansas City area house that became her home following her birth in November 2007 in California.



Most eyes were on Mariella in the arms of Mark, her Father. Cabrina, Mom; Marianna, big sister; and Sister Peg Driscoll watched the toddler while Morgan, big sister also, worked on stringing rosary beads.

The Magees welcomed Mariella into their lives through the St. Joseph Adoption Ministry, a licensed child placement agency located in Kansas City, Kan., and sponsored by the Congregation of St. Joseph, based in Cleveland, Ohio. Sister Peg Driscoll, SCL, works with the agency as its licensed social worker. She partners with Sister Dolora May, CSJ, executive director, and Sister Mary Healy, CSJ, accountant.

The St. Joseph Adoption Ministry exists to help Catholic married couples adopt children within the United States. The agency's success rate is astounding: in recent years, 83 percent of their clients adopted within six months. The extensive referral base carefully screened and cultivated over several years by Sister Dolora accounts for this quick turnaround.

As the three sisters work as a team, their division of labor is clearly a labor of love. A couple interested in adopting generally has an initial meeting with all three sisters for clarity about the process and for assessment by the adoption ministry staff of the couple's readiness for adoption. "Through the

application process," Sister Dolora said, "we get to know the family better. This is helpful in connecting them with potential adoption resources."

The process includes completing an extensive formal application and employment history; undergoing review of the respective State Bureau of Investigation, Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Child Abuse Network records; and developing a portfolio shared with prospective birth parents as the basis for the selection of the adoptive parents.

Sister Peg does an in depth home study as required by Kansas regulations, or the agency contracts with adoption professionals in other states to complete this required step. Within a month following the adoption, a post-placement visit occurs. Subsequent post-placement visits are scheduled as required by the state legalizing the adoption.

The ministry's reach is nationwide both for the adoptive children and for the parents seeking to adopt them. Over the past seven years, the agency has arranged 126 adoptions, including seven sets of twins. Most adoptive parents find the St. Joseph's Adoption Ministry by word of mouth.

Cabrina Magee calls the three sisters, "the God squad." Morgan, her daughter, thought so much of Sister Peg that she nominated her as the "Kindest Kansas Citian" for a school recognition program.

As for the sisters, what they do is a ministry. "We meet the needs of people and of the times," Sister Peg said.

"It's a win-win situation," said Sister Mary. "The parents are able to adopt, and the child gets a home with a mother and father who provide the child with opportunities that he or she would never have received if left in the environment of the birth parents."



In their office in Kansas City, Kan., staff of the St. Joseph Adoption Ministry meets. Left to right, Sister Peg Driscoll, SCL, Sister Dolora May, CSJ, and Sister Mary Healy, CSJ, with Joey, office manager and Sister Peg's golden retriever.

Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

Music ministry comforts

Sister Sheila Taylor's musical talents frequently grace liturgical celebrations at the Mother House.

In another dimension of her music ministry, she soothes critically ill patients at Providence Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan., with calming therapeutic harp music.



Sister Sheila Taylor – certified music practitioner and music minister.

Sister Sheila, a certified music practitioner, also plays the harp for individual sisters in Ross Hall one afternoon a week and provides peaceful music for a sister who may be entering the actively dying stage.

At Providence one afternoon a week, Sister Sheila checks in with the spiritual care and palliative care departments for names of patients to visit. On average, she is with each patient for 15 to 20 minutes. She matches the type of music she plays to the individual situation.

Sister Sheila said that harp music has proven to regulate the heart rate, lower blood pressure, relieve pain and anxiety, aid mental focus, and create a spiritual environment. “When I’m invited into someone’s sacred space,” she added, “as they struggle for life or perhaps are in the dying process, it is such a privilege and a holy experience to be able to provide music that is peaceful and calming to patients.

“The main goal is that the music ‘serve’ the patient in whatever way it is meant to do,” she said.

Sister Sheila has degrees in both music education and music therapy. She was a music educator for 30 years. Five years ago, she took harp lessons and subsequently enrolled in the Music for Healing and Transition program at Tulsa Cancer Treatment Center in Oklahoma. Following coursework, Sister Sheila did her internship at Providence, encouraged by Mary Jo Gregory, executive vice president/COO of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System. Sister Sheila received certification as a music practitioner in April 2008.



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