

Good NEWS

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THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Shelter from the Storm: *Carrying on a Franciscan Tradition*

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Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves
to “rebuilding the Church”
by living the passion of the Gospel
in the discerning spirit
of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary risks
to be a healing, compassionate presence
in our violent world especially with women,
children, and those who have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment
in our dialogue with the entire Church,
in our own governing structures, and
in our relationship with one another as sister.

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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel
mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
by sharing the good news of the congregation with
our friends, family, Companions, and sisters. Through
this publication, we hope to share the charism of our
congregation and invite others to become involved in
our mission.

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POINT OF VIEW

I am a PROMISE.

I am a POSSIBILITY.

I am a PROMISE with a capital P.

I am a great big bundle of POTENTIALITY.

Many years ago I first heard these words sung by a rousing Gospel choir that included children of different ages. As the Sisters of St. Francis were gathered to listen, it seemed that the children that lined the front row of the choir were most vocal, most animated, as they punched out the words PROMISE, POSSIBILITY, POTENTIALITY with great gusto. The words of this song and that image have stayed with me, often popping up in my reflections on the value of the human person, on our Franciscan value of relationship that invites us to meet every person in a spirit of reverence and respect. Relationship energizes us to encourage everyone that we meet to believe in their own value, in their own giftedness, and in their own potential for growth and for good.

This edition of *Good News* highlights the promise, the possibility, the potentiality for Gary and the residents of Benedict House, a shelter that provides emergency and transitional housing for men in Bremerton, Washington, as well as for Lindsay Fortier and the students of The Catholic High School in Baltimore, Maryland.

Gary first met Sister Pat Millen, OSF, at a temporary shelter set up through her efforts to serve the housing needs of men who were homeless. Sister Pat forged ahead with her vision for a more permanent housing solution that would provide the men not only with a safe place to stay, but also with practical resources and supportive programs that will enable them to get their lives back on track. That vision became a reality in 2006 when Gary moved into Benedict House and found a warm home, his sobriety, and a renewed relationship with God. How wonderful it is that through the commitment of Sister Pat Millen and the Benedict House staff that Gary has found promise and possibility in his life!

This issue also introduces us to Lindsay Fortier, a senior at Catholic High in Baltimore, Maryland, to Dr. Barbara Nazelrod, President, and to Tonie Staudenmaier Wallace-Aitkin, both graduates of Catholic High. All of these women have been touched by the Franciscan spirit that permeates the spiritual and educational programs there. Lindsay, whose mother is also a graduate, appreciates the teachers and support staff, saying “They back me up! I come to school confident that I am going to learn.” Catholic High’s good news is in the desire of the leadership, faculty, and staff for each young woman to believe in her own potential for excellence, in the panorama of possibilities for her future that a strong education brings.

As we reflect on the stories in this issue, let us not forget to remind ourselves of our own value as persons, of our own potential for making a difference in our world, of the gracious promise of our generous God to provide what we need on this road called life.

Blessings on you and your family!

Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin, OSF

Congregational Minister

On the cover: Delicious hot meals are cooked every day by volunteers. Residents Richard (left) and Chris (right) are ready to enjoy a good meal.



Onsite Manager Terry Longstreet (left) helps Benedict House resident James decipher medical insurance forms. Residents sleep on bunk beds, four to a room.

Shelter from the Storm:

Carrying on a Franciscan Tradition

“I’D WANTED TO QUIT DRUGS FOR A LONG TIME. I JUST NEVER DID IT. I’D FINALLY JUST HAD ENOUGH OF IT AND I QUIT.”

Program Director Sister Pat Millen (below) works with Lead Site Monitor Alex Munro in his office.



Sister Pat Millen remembers getting a phone call from the pastor of a local church on a cold winter day in 2000. “He said, ‘You’ve got to do something about these men sleeping in my church,’” she recalled. Sister Pat works for Catholic Community Services in Bremerton, Washington, a blue-collar town on Puget Sound dominated by Navy shipyards long past their glory days. Life is not always generous to the citizens of Bremerton—a fifth of the population lives below the poverty line—and hard luck stories abound, many involving an eviction notice.

Sister Pat knew that the only homeless shelter for men in the area had closed its doors. “If St. Francis were alive today, he would be paying attention to those who are homeless,” she said. Sister Pat is one of forty-five members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia living in the Seattle-Tacoma area. “People who are homeless are the lepers of today,” Sister Pat said. “Francis worked on the fringes with outcasts, the ones without a voice. Women and children—we seem to have compassion for them. But the men? We don’t want anything to do with them.”

Sister Pat, currently the Kitsap Family Center Developer and Benedict House Program Director, has held many jobs in her substantial career: a guidance counselor for high

school girls, an advocate in a Yupik village in Alaska, a case manager in a Delaware women’s shelter, a community development worker in California. She decided she could not stand by idly while men in her community lacked shelter. Calm, formidable, and resourceful—“no” is not a reasonable answer in her book—Sister Pat got busy to see what she could do.

Homeless: Hitting Bottom

Gary* found himself without a home around the same time that Sister Pat was getting busy. A Navy veteran, Gary worked as a heavy equipment operator, climbing through the ranks to a good paycheck. But Gary had a secret; he was addicted to drugs and not just any drugs—heroin and meth-amphetamines—and he’d been using them for years. One day Gary failed a drug test at work. Fired for cause, with no unemployment checks to pad his fall, he soon lost his home and his marriage unraveled. Gary started sleeping in his car.

“I’m not the type to blame other people for something I did to myself,” he said. “I’d wanted to quit drugs for a long time. I just never did it.” Gary hit bottom and he hit hard, but it woke him up. “I’d finally just had enough of it and I quit,” he said.

* Last names have been omitted to protect privacy

Sister Pat was working with Bremerton area churches to come up with short- and long-range plans for housing men who were homeless. The First Christian Church opened its doors to a dozen or so men for the short haul; other churches took on the task of providing meals. Gary credits Sister Pat and the “kind people at the shelter” with saving his life. He slept on a mat on the floor but he didn’t mind. “I had a warm place to sleep and good food. I mean, how much better could it be?”

Planning for a Permanent Shelter

With a dozen men now housed temporarily at the First Christian Church, Sister Pat pushed ahead with efforts for a long-term solution. She enlisted private and public



The Benedict House, a shelter for homeless men, sits in a quiet neighborhood in Bremerton, Washington.

continued on page 4



“FOR YEARS I COVERED GOD UP;
YOU CAN’T BE REAL CLEAR WITH
HIM WHEN YOU’RE USING. NOW IT
FEELS LIKE I’VE COME FULL CIRCLE.”



Former resident Gary is now living with a friend, after calling Benedict House home for nearly two years.

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fundress, churches, volunteers, doctors, restaurants, even quilters to stitch bedding for the men. She brought people together to talk and a vision for a permanent shelter emerged, one that would provide the men not only with a safe place to stay, but also with the practical resources and support to get their lives back on track.

The first big break came when Habitat for Humanity donated a piece of land in a cozy neighborhood near downtown Bremerton. But when word got out that a shelter for men was planned, neighbors responded with near-unanimous opposition.

Roberta Karosich, president of the Kitsap Family Center Advisory Council, volunteered at the temporary shelter and attended the community meetings with Sister Pat to talk about the proposed shelter. She remembers how contentious the discussion became at the first meeting. “There was a lot of fear of the unknown. They complained that drug addicts and child molesters were going to move into the neighborhood,” Karosich recalled. A trained facilitator helped to mediate the next two meetings. Sister Pat and shelter advocates met alarm with facts, explaining that all shelter residents would be subject to national background checks and that there would be a zero-tolerance policy about drugs and alcohol. “I knew we couldn’t please everyone,” Sister Pat said, “but I did make the commitment to be available whenever neighbors called and to respond to their concerns.”

Plans for a new building to house twenty-six men were submitted to the city and while not all of the neighbors were won over, Sister Pat and her allies moved ahead, hoping that with time, people would see that a homeless shelter could be a good neighbor.



“If Francis were alive today, he’d be paying attention to the homeless,” says Sister Pat Millen, founder and director of the shelter. Here, Sister Pat goes over the schedule with volunteers Carla Trantum, Brenda Horsley, and Cynthia Rutan.

Benedict House: Making a House a Home

Benedict House, as the shelter was christened, opened its doors in spring 2006. Gary loaded his van with equipment and bedding from the temporary shelter at First Christian and helped Sister Pat and volunteers get the new shelter up and running. Within weeks it was at full capacity; empty beds remain a rarity.

“The communication network on the streets is faster than anything we could do to put the word out,” said Roberta Karosich, now cochair of the meals program at Benedict House. In 2006, more than 3,000 volunteers from twenty-six churches prepared 9,125 meals for Benedict House residents. Fourteen beds are reserved for emergency housing (up to ninety days); ten beds provide long-term transitional housing (up to twenty-four months). One special bedroom

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Toothpaste, a pen and paper, a pre-paid phone card—simple, useful items homeless men may not be able to afford when they leave a homeless shelter to start life on their own. Make a cash donation to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and we’ll send your contribution to the Benedict House in Bremerton, Washington, to support these and other expenses associated with helping residents get back on their feet.
- The kitchen volunteers at Benedict House report that they receive great satisfaction from their work preparing and serving meals to the men who reside there. Contact your local homeless shelter and volunteer once a month along with three or four others from your church.
- Though the red-hot real estate market has begun to cool off, affordable housing is still hard to come by in many communities. Habitat for Humanity and nonprofit community development organizations in your region offer volunteer opportunities for those who would like to help a family realize the dream of owning their own home.
- The number of Americans living below the poverty line grew by four million between 1999 and 2005, according to the Brookings Institution. This leaves a lot of men, women, and children out in the cold. Educate yourself about efforts to create housing trust funds to finance affordable housing. If none exists in your area, talk to your city council representative about starting one. Volunteer to spearhead the effort.

Share with us the good news of what you did!
Call or email us with the action(s) you took: (610) 558-7726, goodnews@osfphila.org.



Ken, a carpenter by trade, found himself without a home and came to Benedict House. Staff person Carol Brown gathers information prior to admitting him as a resident.



is set aside for men with children. "When we have children living here, there are a lot of 'daddies' helping out," said Karosich.

In residence from day one, Gary became an instant old-timer at Benedict House. He took on the job of setting the tables for the evening meal in the immaculate dining room. "This place has been a blessing for me," he said. "It's kept me sober." Gary appreciates the homey bedrooms, which sleep four men in wooden bunks, as well as the computers, laundry, and common areas available for residents' use.

Practical Help

Gary often sits and talks with on-site case manager Alex Munro in the evenings. “He helps you with this or that,” Gary said. “It’s just someone to talk to you—that’s a lot right there.” Munro and his colleague Terry Longstreet screen newcomers, dish out advice, link the men to services and opportunities, and help them find work and housing. “We do whatever is necessary to get them in and out,” said Munro. “I don’t call it case management; I call it grandfatherly advice.”

Four or five men often wander into Munro's office after dinner, he said, and "sit around and share stories about jobs, housing, troubles with families, how to put all that back together again. I'm a resource for information and Terry gets them ready for interviews and job searches. We start with their practical needs. Yes, this is a safe place to stay but we also have computers, clothing, a laundry, razors and shampoo, and free phones they can use for call-backs when they're looking for work, so no one has to know they're living in a shelter."

Munro has only seen two men in as many years that he said he could have pegged as homeless. "I'm amazed at the men who come in here; they're as normal as anyone you'd meet. Yesterday they had jobs, today nothing," he said. Poverty is the common denominator—poverty and addiction, a devastating cocktail. "Drugs got 'em," said Munro, a man with thirty years of recovery under his belt. All of the men living at Benedict House are living clean and sober. Twelve-step meetings are held in the dining

room and some men attend treatment programs in the community.

"If people would accept these guys," Munro said, "they'd have an easier time getting back in the game. Homeless people are like you and me. Most Americans are just two paychecks away from homelessness. We forget that."

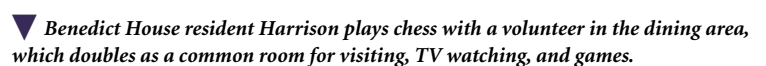
A New Start, a New Home

One weekend recently Gary loaded all of his worldly possessions into his van again but this time he unpacked at a mobile home he now shares with a friend. He said his time at Benedict House was “like a renewing. For years I covered God up; you can’t be real clear with Him when you’re using. Now it feels like I’ve come full circle.”

That was the aim all along, said Alex Munro. “We tell them, ‘our job is to get you from point A to point B: out of here.’ But of course if I don’t hear from someone, I call and say, ‘Where are you? Don’t be a stranger.’” Seventy-two percent of the residents of Benedict House move on to permanent housing.

Sister Pat is pleased with what she sees at Benedict House. "The feedback from the men is positive," she said. "I enjoy seeing the men relax. They've taken ownership. They keep it clean; there's a sense of pride." St. Francis's mission to serve the society's outcasts is realized in Benedict House. Men like Gary—once lost—gain another chance to go home again, to claim their dignity, to start over. ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.



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► Ken (left, with weed whacker) and 14-year-old Jamison tidy up the yard of Benedict House. Jamison stayed at Benedict House with his father.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Who are the 'Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia'?

Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.

Sister Rose Cecilia Case, OSF, was one of the 190 congregational leaders who, together with the TOR Work Group, gathered in Rome in 1982 for the final approval of the new TOR Rule, The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

PENNSYLVANIA

More than 200 sisters and Companions gathered in the Neumann College Life Center on August 11 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Third Order Regular Rule. Presenters Sister Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, and Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, were joined by special guests Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, Sister Rose Cecilia Case, OSF, and Jean François Godet-Calogera. All three of these special guests were among those gathered in Rome in 1982 when the Rule was officially approved by Pope John Paul II. Sister Rose Cecilia was Congregational Minister of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia at the time of the approval and was largely responsible for making the TOR Rule a viable part of the congregation's life and history. Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin, current Congregational Minister, celebrated Sister Rose's contributions and described her lovingly as "our second foundress."

WASHINGTON

In an overburdened social welfare system, abused and neglected children often slip through the cracks. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteers help to bridge that gap. As a CASA volunteer, Sister Donna Fread is currently working with four such cases, each of which will take eighteen months to two years to bring to completion. Her work keeps her busy researching each case, collaborating with social workers, participating in all hearings and settlements, and developing recommendations for the court.

and Kathy taught classes on sisterhood, the obedience of love and service, and ministry as the enjoyment of God. They gained a new appreciation for the abundance of materials and resources we often take for granted. They were particularly impressed by the sisters' eagerness to learn. "They were thirsty for materials," said Sister Julie. "They would have gone on all night if possible."



INDIANA

Former member Susan Steibe-Pasalich was one of four individuals recently appointed to the National Review Board of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The twelve-member board, established in 2002, works with the bishops' national child protection office to prevent sexual abuse of minors by persons in the service of the Church in the United States. Susan, who is also a member of the lay review board for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, is a licensed clinical psychologist and the director of the University Counseling Center of the University of Notre Dame.



AFRICA

When Sisters Julie McCole and Kathy Ganiel headed off to Nairobi to teach, they experienced a bit of very natural anxiety—primarily concerns about the unknown. They quickly realized, however, that these incidentals didn't matter. They met a group of African sisters who had traveled long distances to attend the program on Franciscan theology and spirituality, which is a component of the Franciscan Itinerant School. During the three-week program, Sisters Julie

Participants in the Franciscan Itinerant School program came from nine African English-speaking countries and included one secular Franciscan and thirty-one Third Order women religious.



NEW JERSEY

Franciscan Companion Connie Starling has a long history with the Sisters of St. Francis. She first met the sisters when she was a child attending St. Anthony School in Trenton. As an adult, Connie became a Third Order Secular Franciscan and a Franciscan Companion in Mission (the congregation’s lay associate program). This past summer she spent a week volunteering at Assisi House, the congregation’s retirement residence in Aston, Pennsylvania. “God allowed me to have some time now that I didn’t have before I retired,” Connie explained. “I always wanted to give back to these wonderful sisters for all that I received from them when I was growing up.” At Assisi House she fed sisters who were unable to eat by themselves, helped others to write thank-you notes, joined in Bingo games and “sit and fit” exercises, and even enjoyed a field trip to Borders. Connie was particularly touched when one of the sisters gave her several hand-made craft items. “These pieces of art are taped to the door of my bedroom as a reminder of my time at Assisi House,” Connie said.



PENNSYLVANIA

After much cleaning, painting, and repairing, Anna’s Place, one of the congregation’s newest sponsored ministries in Chester, is ready to open. Named after the congregation’s foundress, Maria Anna Bachmann (Mother Francis), Anna’s Place is a hospital-ity drop-in center which provides a place where neighbors can get together and just “be.” Director Sister Mary Peter Kerner and a host of volunteers have set up a game room where visitors can relax and a conversation room where they can gather to read, watch TV, or chat with friends. Arts and crafts are available for those who want to share their talents and a prayer room provides an opportunity to spend a few minutes in quiet reflection. Many visitors end up in the snack room for a hot drink and a plate of cookies. All in all, Anna’s Place offers a quiet refuge in the midst of a busy but sometimes lonely city.



Sister Corinne Wright (left), seen here with Sister Virginia Spiegel, received the Peacemaker Award at the 2007 Franciscan Federation gathering. Sister Corinne was chosen because of her contributions in promoting the environmental initiatives of the Sisters of St. Francis.

WASHINGTON

At St. Francis House in Puyallup, Santa’s elves are busy long before Christmas. Throughout the year staff members are on the lookout for new items among their donations—toys, clothing, anything with gift potential. Six weeks before Christmas, the staff sets up the traditional “Christmas Corner.” Clients are invited to visit the “Christmas Corner” and to choose one gift for each member of their family. Sister Patricia Michalek, Director of St. Francis House, noted that last Christmas 965 families visited the “Christmas Corner”—and all found gifts to brighten their family’s Christmas!



ILLINOIS

For Sister Hope Bauerlin, the effects of debt on struggling countries has been an issue of long-standing concern. However, her participation in Jubilee USA’s recent Grassroots Conference in Chicago broadened her understanding and deepened her resolve to work toward debt relief. She was particularly influenced by the sessions dealing with the effects of trade on debt. In another session she learned about “vulture funds,” which allow wealthy investors to “buy” a country’s debt and then charge that country an even larger interest rate. At present Sister Hope is involved in promoting the “Cancel the Debt Fast” and plans to spend the day of her own fast in Washington, DC. For more information, visit www.jubileeusa.org.

PENNSYLVANIA

Most organizations provide employee orientation sessions, acquainting newcomers with the organization’s values and mission. For Leon Francis, Director of Campus Safety and Security at Neumann College, that orientation had a profound effect. When Leon learned about the Franciscan values that are the touchstone of Neumann’s programs, he knew he needed to learn more. His self-study led him to an even deeper interest. Today he integrates those values into the training he gives employees in his department. A student himself in Neumann’s Continuing Adult and Professional Studies Program, he often gives presentations on Franciscan values in his classes. Recently Sister Patricia Hutchison, Director of the Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies, drew on Leon’s commitment and interest by inviting him to share with adjunct faculty members how the Franciscan tradition has influenced his life and work.

AWARDS SPOTLIGHT



While we appreciate the many gifts of our sisters, we are especially pleased when those gifts are recognized by the broader community. The following sisters recently received special awards:

Sister Maria Gross Florida

Hall of Fame Inductee
Little Flower High School, Philadelphia

Sister Joan Dreisbach New Jersey

Nostrum Ecclesiam Tempus Award
Diocese of Trenton

Sister Barbara Furst New Jersey

Nostrum Ecclesiam Tempus Award
Diocese of Trenton



Dr. Barbara Nazelrod, president of Catholic High, talks with students between classes, (left to right) Nikki Roros, Brittanie Cochran, and Lisa Pusco. Eleven thousand young women have graduated from the school since it opened in 1939.



Tonie Staudenmaier Wallace-Aitken (left), a graduate of Catholic High, attends a board meeting with Dr. Barbara Nazelrod (center). Tonie and her husband, Greig Aitken, recently pledged \$1 million to Catholic High to support and enhance its programs.



Lindsay Fortier (center) was named Junior of the Year in 2007. "I come to school knowing the teachers will help me," she says.

Tradition and Change

“NEARLY ONE HUNDRED PERCENT OF OUR YOUNG WOMEN GO ON TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION.” SAID DR. NAZELROD

When Lindsay Fortier looked for a high school to attend in the Baltimore area, she didn’t search for long. There was only one school she seriously considered: The Catholic High School of Baltimore. “Lindsay was in love with Catholic High from the fourth grade on,” her mother Mary Fortier said. “We encouraged her to look around, but her heart was set on Catholic High before we ever went to an open house.”

Lindsay’s mother is a graduate of Catholic High (’80) and works full-time at the school as a receptionist and bookkeeper. Fortier is one of many graduates who have returned to the school over the years as teachers, staff, or administrators, including the school’s president Dr. Barbara Nazelrod (’68). “There is an incredible spirit of cooperation and love of the school,” said Dr. Nazelrod. Like Lindsay Fortier, a significant number of Catholic High’s students today follow in the footsteps of their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters who walked the same echoing hallways in their day.

A New Direction

Eight hundred young women attended Catholic High when Mary Fortier was a student in the late 1970s. Enrollment has dropped considerably during the last three decades, mirroring demographic trends for parochial schools nationwide; 296 students attended Catholic High in 2006-07. But that trend is beginning to turn in the other direction.



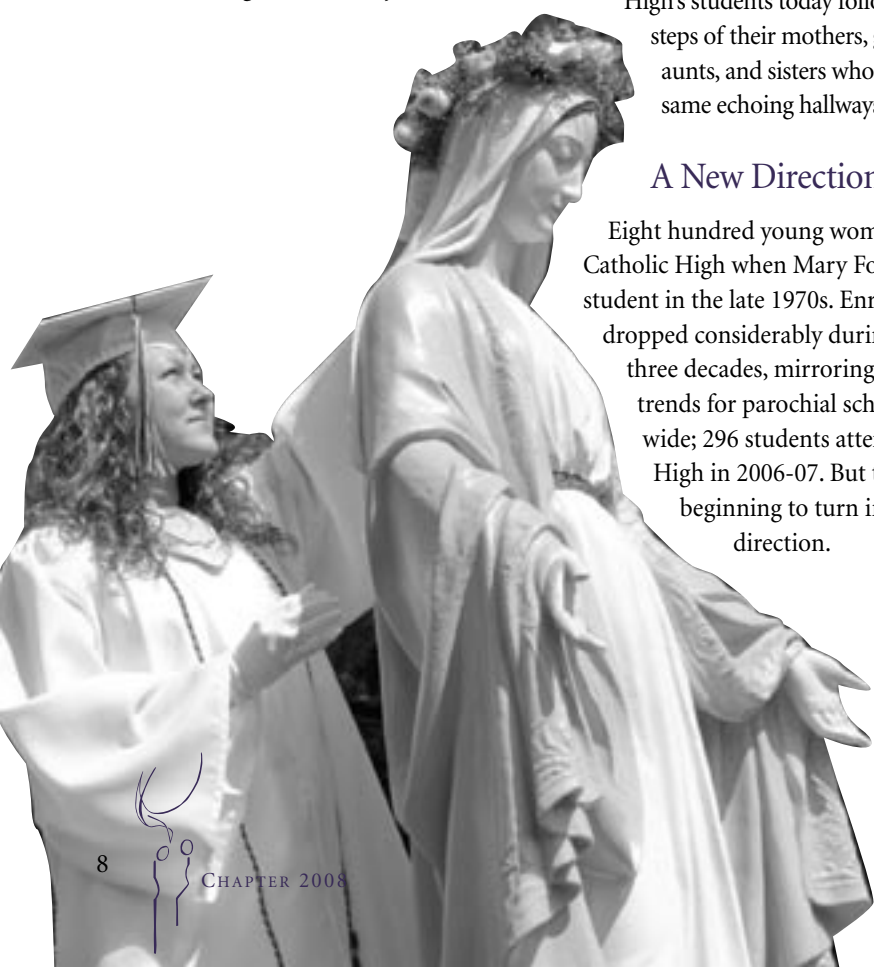
Lindsay Fortier stops by the office to say hello to her mother, Mary, also a Catholic High graduate. Many students at the school follow in the footsteps of their sisters, aunts, mothers, and grandmothers who went to Catholic High.

One reason for the turn-around is Catholic High’s growing reputation for excellence. The school boasts a small student-to-teacher ratio and attrition among teachers and support staff is low. “They back me up,” said Lindsay, who was named Junior of the Year in 2007. “They don’t let anyone fail. The teachers give me material that college students would do. Our teachers bring out the best in us.” The school prepares young women like Lindsay to succeed in college or in whatever they choose to do with their lives. “Nearly one hundred percent of our young women go on to further their education,” said Dr. Nazelrod. Catholic High graduating seniors secured \$2.2 million in college scholarships in 2007.

The Franciscan Tradition

Much about Catholic High remains unchanged since its founding in 1939. “Our mission is based on our Franciscan identity, heritage, and tradition,” Dr. Nazelrod said. “Sure, we’ve changed in the obvious ways. There is a computer lab, televisions in the classrooms, and the library has been renovated. But it has the same spirit, the same feel it has always had.” The Depression-era building retains a sense of architectural history with tall windows and high ceilings, polished floors, and a graciously proportioned auditorium, albeit with new seats and curtains.

Miss Catholic High 2007 Julie Mastroianni places a crown on a statue of the Blessed Mother during the annual May Procession.



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia continue to support Catholic High in Baltimore, Maryland, and its mission to provide an excellent Franciscan education for young women. Make a cash donation to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and we'll send your contribution to Catholic High to support its outstanding programs and scholarships for low-income students.
- Service to others is central to the Franciscan way of life. Consider volunteering at a local Catholic school on a program that needs your help or work with the school to link students to volunteer opportunities with seniors and children in the community.
- Consider becoming a mentor to a high school student. Check out your local high school to see if they have a mentoring program.
- Catholic High alumnae are very supportive of the school and its programs. Consider checking with your alumni association to see how you can be of help.
- Several generations of Franciscan sisters have devoted themselves (and continue to do so) to education. Consider interviewing retired sisters in your parish about their experiences teaching—their memories and impressions of a lifetime of service—and assemble the recorded and transcribed interviews into a notebook for the school library. Consider displaying short excerpts along with photographs at a special event honoring them. Check out the web site of Indiana University for ideas about getting started. www.indiana.edu/~cshm/techniques.html

Share with us the good news of what you did! Call or email us with the action(s) you took: (610) 558-7726, goodnews@osfphila.org.



Miss Catholic High 2007 Julie Mastroianni (left), a senior, and Lindsay Fortier (right), who was named Junior of the Year in 2007, share a few moments before joining the procession into Mass on graduation day.

at Catholic High: *Educating Young Women for Life*

Still, some things are different. Mary Fortier remembers that young women used to walk between classes in silence when she attended Catholic High. “Students still have only three minutes to get to class but the halls are a lot noisier now,” she said. She also notes that while Catholic High always provided a strong Catholic education for girls, the school is now known for its excellent college prep curriculum. Another big change is in the arena of sports. Like girls in public schools, Catholic High students now participate in soccer, field hockey, basketball, and softball. The school’s soccer team came close to pocketing the district title in 2007. Lindsay Fortier plays field hockey and is a cheerleader for the basketball players during the winter. “I love cheering on the girls I know,” she said.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have been teaching at the school since its inception, but they no longer live on campus. The former convent now houses administrative and faculty offices and the Board Room. The sisters remain actively involved in Catholic High, as faculty and staff. The congregation sponsors the high school and recently contributed money for the school’s endowment and to upgrade windows. The Sisters of St. Francis continue to offer their support of Catholic High in part because the school does such an outstanding job of educating young women in Franciscan values. It is precisely this emphasis on Franciscan values that encourages students to participate in various community service projects. Catholic High graduate and former faculty member Sister Helen Jacobson described the school’s tradition of dedicating the first Friday of October—on or near the Feast of St. Francis—as a special day of service. The entire student body spends the early part of the day rendering

service at various sites throughout Baltimore City and County. In the afternoon, students share those experiences at a school assembly in the context of a reflective prayer service—sometimes attended by city and diocesan officials. School-wide projects like this expose students to concrete expressions of compassion, generosity, and caring for people in need.

Guiding Principles

Tonie Staudenmaier Wallace-Aitken (’65) grew up near Catholic High in northeast Baltimore, then home to Italian and ethnic European families only a generation or two settled on American soil. Her father was a milkman and she remembers the Italian groceries, bakeries, meat shops, and bars marking every corner of the neighborhood. Her family lived in a row house with “a family to the left of you, a family to the right,” she said. “Everyone knew what you were doing.”

She credits the Sisters of St. Francis at Catholic High with instilling the principles that still guide her life: faith, discipline, and “that Franciscan thing—that expectation of perfection. Whether or not you achieved it was not the point. The point was to give it your best effort.” Tonie is now a successful businesswoman and the founder and CEO of Advanced Legal Technologies in Virginia. She and her husband, Greig Aitken, recently pledged \$1 million to Catholic High to support and enhance its programs.

“Catholic High gave me the ability to compete. You just assume you’ll be successful. Why not? I didn’t know any better. In co-ed schools the boys are the star athletes and the girls are behind the scenes. But at Catholic High, the girls were—and are—the stars—

both in academics and sports,” she said. “It makes such a difference.”

The decades since Wallace-Aitken graduated have brought profound changes to northeast Baltimore. White and middle-class flight to the suburbs, crime, and public and private disinvestment have taken their toll on the old neighborhood. Northeast Baltimore, in the shadow of Johns Hopkins Hospital, is now home to mostly African American families who struggle to raise their children amidst the hazards of poverty. The school is making a effort to include more young women from the surrounding neighborhoods and to provide financial aid to make attendance possible.

continued on page 10



Delisha Thompson (right) talks with her classmates Stephanie Smith (center) and Mary Clare Soellner (left). “Catholic High is a safe and comfortable place to learn and to just be myself,” Delisha says. “You don’t have to worry about people judging you.”





Sister Margaret Xavier Romans coordinates Catholic High's Archangel Program, which provides tutoring and encouragement to students who need a little extra help to succeed. "I was never a good student myself," says Sister Margaret. "But that has helped me become the good teacher I am today. I tell them 'I had the same hassles you have today.'"

Tradition and Change at Catholic High

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"Catholic High isn't limited to a privileged elite," said Dr. Nazelrod. "Our student body is diverse and we open our doors to fulfill our mission and accept young women of all economic and social backgrounds. We're willing to take a chance on a young woman who may not have many options." Half of the students who graduate from Catholic High are among the first generation in their families to go to college. The school's Archangel Program mentors freshmen and sophomores who can benefit from extra one-on-one help in math and English. The program helps them be better prepared for college prep classes later on.

Tonie serves on Catholic High's board of trustees and often visits the school to talk with the students. She envisions more improvements to the campus and continued efforts to connect the school to surrounding communities. "I honestly believe I am who I am because of the Sisters of St. Francis and Catholic High," she said. "And the school continues to send young talented women out into the world."

Lindsay Fortier has one more year at Catholic High before she's off to college. She spent her summer between junior and senior year at a summer camp "for kids who don't get to see nature a lot. They didn't know what to expect but they were eager to be part of it once they arrived." She loves literature and poetry and thinks she may want to be a psychologist, maybe a teen counselor, but all of that is a way off still. She's got another year to go at Catholic High and she's savoring her time.

"I come to school confident I'm going to learn," she said. "There's a family here I can turn to. They've helped me get mentally and socially ready. I've jumped into everything I could here from Student Council to youth ministry. They've given me a lot of structure and that helps me do well and be organized. I really go with my feelings, my intuition, and I knew from the time I was little that this was the place for me—and it is."

While presently redefining and extending its reach, The Catholic High School of Baltimore is part of a tradition that dates back to a meeting of 19th century bishops at the Basilica of the Assumption in Baltimore, establishing a system of Catholic schools for the country. "Everyone knows the good news about Catholic High—we are here to stay!" the school's president Dr. Nazelrod said. "Our goal is to have 400 young women attending school here—our best ambassadors are the girls themselves." ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

Focus

ROSALIE MIRENDA

That Rosalie Mirenda is a woman with a Franciscan heart is not hard to imagine considering her long connection with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. This affiliation actually began during her years at Hallahan High School in Philadelphia. In 1956, Rosalie moved on to Villanova University where she met Sister Margarella O'Neill (now deceased), Dean of Villanova's School of Nursing. Little did she realize the extent to which their paths would intersect in later years. Rosalie also worked for six years at St. Agnes Hospital in Philadelphia where, once again, she forged a path with the Sisters of St. Francis.

In 1973 Rosalie moved on to Neumann College, one of the congregation's sponsored ministries. She taught in the nursing division, eventually became chair of that division, and later served as Vice President of Academic Affairs. In 1996 Rosalie was named Neumann College's fifth president. Conscious of the congregation's collaborative model, she invited others to

join her in pursuing the future growth of the college—"to advance Neumann College as a recognized Catholic Franciscan higher education institution focused on its mission and values." That invitation—that willingness to collaborate—has reaped outstanding growth at Neumann: a quadrupled undergraduate census, an expansion of graduate degree programs, and extensive growth of the physical campus.

The Summer 2006 *Accent*, the college magazine, described Rosalie's leadership style as one of "perpetual motion"—an apt assessment that may account for the success she has achieved. The article states that Rosalie "has forged a reputation as a tireless advocate and savvy visionary during her ten years in the president's chair, a seat that's often empty because she is known for keeping a schedule that would exhaust the Energizer Bunny."

The Neumann College website describes Rosalie as a woman who "underscores her life with the values of authenticity, respect for others, and a search for truth." That desire for authenticity, that respect for others is, perhaps, what drives Rosalie's consciousness of the totality of her life. Her love for her family—her husband, Tony; her sons, Anthony and John; her daughter, Lee; and her five grandchildren—is evident to anyone who knows Rosalie. Her connection to the Sisters of St. Francis is evidenced in ways that go beyond the day-to-day dealings of Neumann College. When a collapse of pipes necessitated the evacuation of Our Lady of Angels Convent a few years ago, Rosalie and Tony were on the scene within minutes to help move the sisters into the dorms.

Rosalie herself sees her journey with the Sisters of St. Francis as an integral part of her life. "The sisters' invitation to the laity to collaborate with them in their ministries has been a gift to our world and one to which I responded and accepted many years ago," she said. "My journey with our congregation is a privilege and serves as inspiration to be the best I can be as administrator, educator, wife, mother, and grandmother."

"MY JOURNEY WITH OUR CONGREGATION IS A PRIVILEGE AND SERVES AS INSPIRATION TO BE THE BEST I CAN BE..."



Rosalie and Tony love spending time just relaxing with their grandchildren. (L-R) Steve and Anthony DelleMonache, Gabriela, Alyssa, and Justin Mirenda.

Rosalie's former mentor from Villanova, Sister Margarella O'Neill, was also at Neumann during Rosalie's early tenure and eventually became the college's third president.



SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org



Renewal of Vows

On August 10, Sister Patricia Kerezi renewed her vows in Our Lady of Angels Chapel in Aston. Gathered with her were approximately 100 members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Sister Patricia explained that it is precisely this type of support that helps her to feel “at home” in the congregation. “These are individuals who choose to live a life committed to God and to be of service to God’s people,” she explained.

(L-R) Sister Julie McCole, Formation Director, and Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin, Congregational Minister, witness Sister Patricia Kerezi’s renewal of vows.



Mother Seton Academy Plans for 15th Anniversary

Students, faculty, and staff at Mother Seton Academy in Baltimore, one of the congregation’s cosponsored ministries, are looking forward to the opening of their 15th Anniversary celebration. The anniversary theme, “Celebrating Fifteen Years of Building Hope and Changing Futures,” is a fitting tribute to the school’s mission—“to provide a holistic education to at-risk students in order to prepare them for future success in high school, college, and the work force.” Board members, faculty, staff, and benefactors will be honored throughout the year with gifts of crystal (in keeping with the traditional symbol of a fifteenth anniversary). Sister Charmaine Krohe, SSND, President of Mother Seton Academy, acknowledged the indebtedness of the school to these supporters. “As we look back over these years, we realize that we have come this far by standing on the shoulders of the hard work and generosity of so many who have gone before us,” she said, “principals, teachers and staff, board members, benefactors, and students.”

Come and See Retreat

Take some time just for you. Allow God to touch your heart. Come visit us for a weekend retreat. Get to know some of our sisters. Hear their stories. Take some time just for you. You’re worth it!

If you are a woman between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five—join us for a weekend retreat on May 2-4, 2008, at Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston, Pennsylvania. Please RSVP by April 25, 2008, by contacting Vocation Director Sister Mary Beth Antonelli, OSF, (610) 558-6789, mantonelli@osfphila.org.

Portland Companions Host Gathering Day

September 29 found the west coast Franciscan Companions in Mission arriving at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie, Oregon, for their annual Gathering Day. Sister Anne Amati, OSF, gave presentations on the life and charism of Mother Francis Bachmann, foundress of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. The day also provided an opportunity for the Companions to chat and to share ideas—and, of course, to “break bread” together over breakfast and lunch.



In Memoriam

Sister Clare Inez Karp
8/12/07

Sister John Helene Meskill
8/12/07

Sister Agnes Joseph Lee
8/11/07

Sister Marie Bernard Howard
7/31/07

Sister Helen Aloyse Reagan
7/28/07

Sister Edward Thomas Griffin
7/27/07

Sister Marie Bride Murphy
6/20/07

Sister Francis Assisi McDade
6/25/07

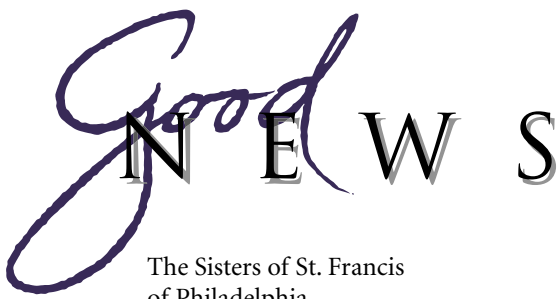
Sister Cecilia Mary Grimes
5/30/07



Sisters happily wave to the photographer as they gather outside the Emmaus Retreat House in Ireland.

Mother Francis Bachmann Retreat

Fifty-two sisters gathered at the Emmaus Retreat House in Swords, Ireland, for the Mother Francis Bachmann retreat. They experienced Mother Francis not only as foundress of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, but also as woman and risk-taker. The sisters who attended shared information on their life journey in the form of a tavola and also considered the heart space of Mother Francis’ life journey. Some of these sisters live and minister in Ireland, but many came from the U.S. to experience the spiritual embrace of retreat and the beautiful fields of green that make up Ireland’s landscape.



The Sisters of St. Francis
of Philadelphia
609 S. Convent Road
Aston, PA 19014-1207

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What do *you* think?

We invite your comments and suggestions about *Good News*. Send to Florence Smith, (610) 558-7726, goodnews@osfphila.org.

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi and our Foundress Mother Francis Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family and with all creation. Calling ourselves and one another to continuous conversion of heart, we commit ourselves to a life of contemplation, poverty and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and of mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit’s action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources to the promotion of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

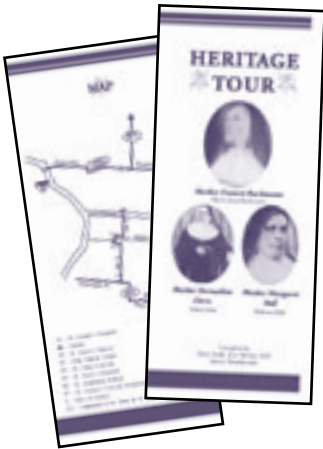
Filled with trust in the goodness of God, we move forward.

Want to know more about our heritage?

Request a brochure and walk in the footsteps of our foundresses.

If you live in or plan on visiting the Philadelphia area, it might interest you to take a self-guided tour of the city to see the birth place of our Franciscan Heritage. From humble beginnings, a timeless tradition of caring for the needs of others was born. See the row home that was once St. Clara Convent, where our founding sisters began a ministry of caring for the sick, and visit the site of St. Alphonsus School where the sisters began teaching in 1858. Take the tour and keep the happy, historical memories for your lifetime.

Contact the Communications Office for a free copy for this brochure (610) 558-7726 or email goodnews@osfphila.org.



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Volunteers assist with day-to-day needs like food service. Can you assist Benedict House in dealing with this unexpected emergency?

Immediate Needs at Benedict House

A short time after the Benedict House story (see p. 3) was written, a malfunction with the sprinkler system pumped out sixty gallons of water per minute—for approximately forty minutes. The result? Carpeting and padding throughout the bedroom floor had to be removed and installation of drying equipment necessitated evacuating the building for at least three days. In addition to replacing the carpeting, restorations will also be needed in the foyer, the multipurpose room, and the computer lab—including the replacement of seven computers. To provide assistance, use the enclosed envelope and indicate that your donation is for Benedict House.



The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia were honored in the 2007 **Hermes**

Creative Awards (Gold Level) for both their *Good News* publication and their recently produced congregational DVD. Hermes Creative Awards, an international competition for creative professionals involved in the concept, writing, and design of traditional and emerging media, recognizes outstanding work in the industry while promoting the philanthropic nature of marketing and communication professionals. Entries came from corporate marketing and communication departments, advertising agencies, PR firms, design shops, production companies, and freelancers. Winners were selected from 136 categories in seven forms of media and communication efforts.



The Spirit of Community

In 1943, sisters actually went door-to-door urging African American parents to send their children to school. Because of their efforts, enrollment at St. Elizabeth School in Philadelphia nearly tripled and with it came the spread of faith and quality education.

The Catholic High of Baltimore is making an effort to include more young women from the surrounding neighborhoods and to provide financial aid to make attendance possible. Read more about the great spirit of community at TCHS on page 8.

