

Volume 17.2 Summer 2014

# Good NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

## Sisters Help Build Hope in Haiti

*Also in this issue:*

- Neighborhood House:  
Built on Healing and  
Compassion
- People & Places
- Foundation Annual Report

## 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.

## 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.

## POINT OF VIEW

### Encouraging, Equipping, Empowering Others

**R**ecently I came across a foundation that awards prizes for simple technology that empowers individuals. The top prize was won by a project to supply cheap glasses in Africa. The one dollar glasses are manufactured on bending and milling machines. After an intensive training, the craftspeople work independently. They can work at home so that a parent can work and take care of the children at the same time. As I read the arti-



**Sister Esther Anderson, OSF**  
**Congregational Minister**

cle, I was reminded of visits to our sisters in numerous countries where I observed the joy of people empowered to improve their lives and the lives of others.

As we reflect on our lives, hopefully we can identify people who recognized potential in us and called it forth. Each of us in turn is uniquely qualified to help at least one person to become his or her best self. Barbara Colorose reminds us that “the beauty of empowering others is that your own power is not diminished in the process.”

In this Good News, we meet Sisters Vicky and Eleanor Joseph who minister with other Franciscans in Haiti. They seek to empower the people through the development of a group known as Christians Progress Together. Members of this group bring their communities together to identify needs and to set goals. The sisters help them find funding and support their efforts.

In South Carolina, Sister Noreen Buttimer ministers at Neighborhood House. There she runs a GED program, assists with a lunch program, and oversees a senior program. Her goal is that the house be more than a stop gap for people. Rather she hopes that Neighborhood House will empower them to get to the next level. We meet Cynthia who credits Sister Noreen with challenging her to commit to her studies. Cynthia now has a GED and is enrolled in the culinary program at a community college.

These past six years, I have had the opportunity to introduce each copy of the Good News to you. On August 18, 2014, I will complete my six year term as congregational minister. My thanks to all our readers and to all who assist us in carrying out our mission. We keep you with gratitude in prayer.

*St. Esther Anderson, OSF*





4



12



11

VOLUME 17.2 SUMMER 2014

# INSIDE *Good* NEWS CONTENTS

Point of View. . . . . 2

Sisters Help Build Hope in Haiti. . 4

*Together the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and the Sylvania Franciscans accompany, empower, and support the people of Haiti. The mission is one that responds in multiple ways to the needs of the people. Projects include efforts to provide clean drinking water, agricultural aid, medical care, education, skills training, and leadership development.*

Written by Deb Litman  
Photography by Daniel Morel

People & Places . . . . . 10

Neighborhood House: Built On Healing and Compassion . . . . . 12

*In a neighborhood where poverty and homelessness prevail, Neighborhood House helps people move toward a better future with hope and healing. Sister Noreen Buttimer's presence helps to empower the people of Charleston by helping participants address their basic needs first so they can move on to focusing on the bigger picture.*

Written by Deb Litman  
Photography by Kelli Boling

Foundation Annual Report . . . . . 16

Focus. . . . . 18

**Communications Office**  
609 South Convent Road  
Aston, PA 19014  
Tel (610) 558-7726  
Fax (610) 558-6131  
goodnews@osfphila.org

**Managing Editor**  
Florence Smith

**Assistant Editor**  
Sister Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

**Editorial Board**  
Dr. Joseph Glass  
Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer, OSF  
Sister Marie Monica Borden, OSF  
Sister Donna Fread, OSF  
Sister Helen Jacobson, OSF  
Sister Pat Michalek, OSF

**Graphic Design**  
Geneen Pintof

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.

*Good News* is published three times a year (spring, summer, winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at address above.

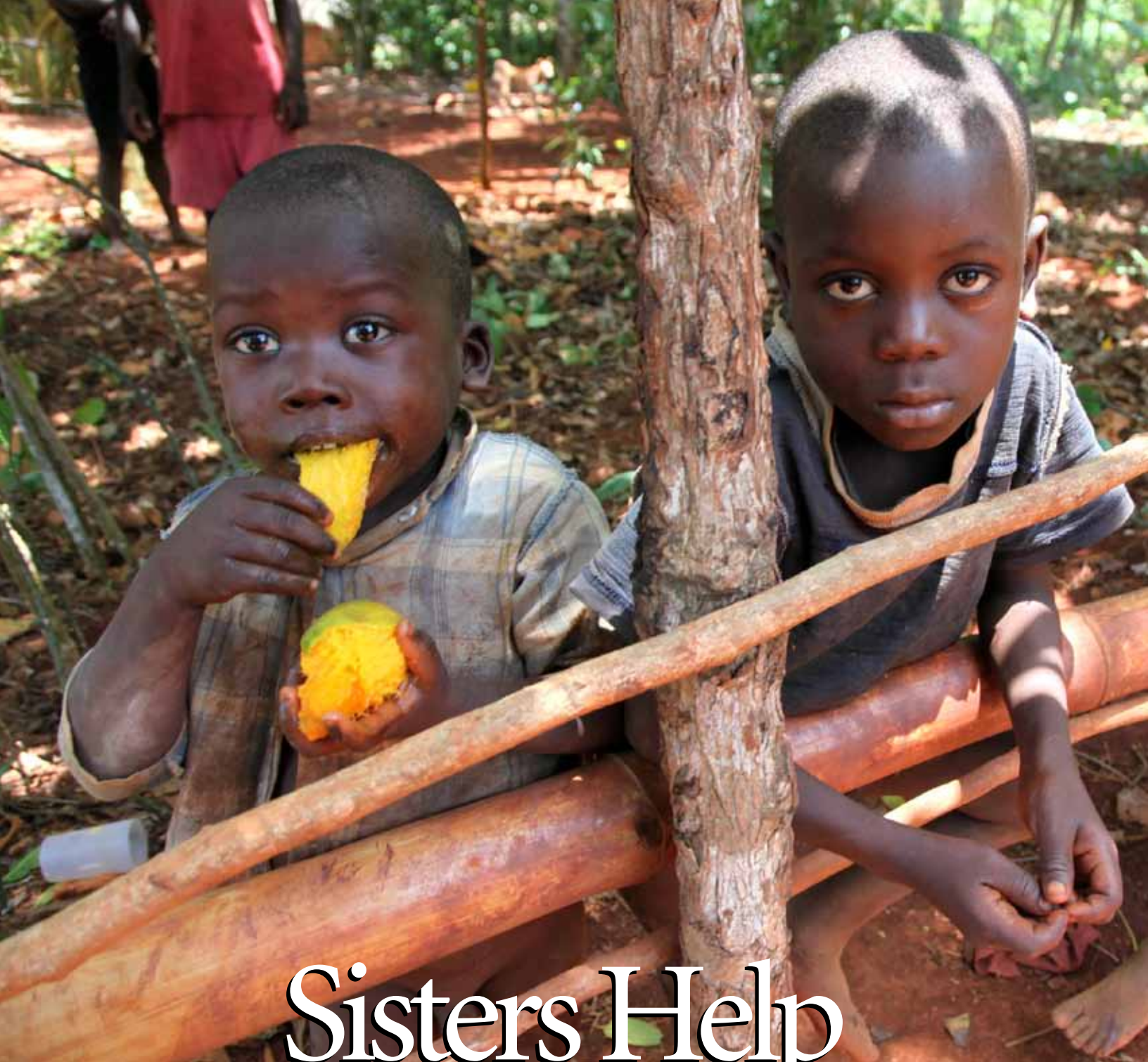
Visit our website! [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)



The environmental savings by printing this document with FSC certified stock on an FSC certified press are:  
Trees preserved for the future: 43; Lbs water-borne waste not created: 124.17; Gallons wastewater flow saved: 18,266; Lbs solid waste not generated: 2,021; Lbs net greenhouse gases prevented: 3,979; BTUs energy not consumed: 30,459,240

*On the cover:* Sister Vicky Della Valle holds the baby of one of her neighbors in the rural Haitian village where she lives and ministers. "The people here are very community centered, very social," said Sister Vicky. "They place great importance on enjoying one another."





# Sisters Help Build Hope in Haiti





*The majority of children living in Ferrier and other villages surrounding the Haitian town of Pestel face challenges from the time they are born—from food and water insecurity to inadequate access to education.*

“MOST LOCALS LIVE IN ONE-ROOM HOMES WITH DIRT FLOORS.”

The noises of daily living that awaken Sister Vicky Della Valle—roosters crowing, bulls bellowing, and farmers singing—echo in the mountains of Ferrier. She has been living in this remote village seven miles from the small city of Pestel on the northern side of the southern peninsula of Haiti for just over a year, but already the sounds are a familiar part of her day.

The home where she lives is simple. A generator provides intermittent electricity and a three-burner stove runs on propane but there is no running water and no refrigeration. The conditions are quite comfortable, however, compared to those of the majority of families in the village. Most locals live in one-room homes with dirt floors. They cook outside over charcoal fires made from the trees that are quickly disappearing from the country’s deforested landscape.

To get a sense of the magnitude of the hardships facing people in Ferrier, one need only ask a handful of individuals to name their biggest concern. The answer comes immediately, without hesitation, and it is always the same whether the person responding is a nurse, a mother, a village leader, a farmer, or a sister. “Water,” they will tell you. “We do not have enough water.”

It is a problem so basic but at the same time so devastatingly crippling that it is hard to imagine where to begin in the face of it. In a village where 85% of people are farmers, the results of this lack of water are simple—not enough to drink and not enough to eat as poor harvests and loss of livestock make survival a daily struggle.

## Forming A Partnership

This is the reality one must understand when dealing with Haiti. It is the starting point for the ministry of Sister Vicky, a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia who works alongside Sisters Fidelis Rubbo and Jo Dybza, members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, Ohio. Beginning in 2011, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia began looking for ways to respond to the significant and ongoing needs of the Haitian people. Rather than reinvent the wheel, they searched for a group with whom to partner. The sisters found that group in the Sylvania sisters who have been ministering in Haiti since 2001. Together, the two congregations formed a partnership to accompany, empower, and support the people of Haiti. In addition to Sister Vicky, who will be in Haiti long-term, the Aston congregation sends



*Sister Vicky Della Valle (right) lives in a modest dwelling with Sisters Fidelis Rubbo (left) and Jo Dybza (not pictured), both of whom are Sylvania Franciscans. The sisters work together on a wide range of projects focused on improving health, agriculture, and economic welfare in the region. Their primary focus, however, is on empowering the Haitians themselves through leadership development.*

*continued on page 6*

► Volunteers Bill and Renee Plaza prepare to install new water filters with the help of a neighborhood man. Bill and Renee, together with eight others, spent a week in the sisters' visitors' house. They donated water filters to each family living in the villages of Pestel's third section. These filters cost 65 U.S. dollars each and are expected to last for 10 years. They also donated and installed a large filtration system for the health clinic in Pestel.



“DESPITE ALL THE DEPRIVATION THE HAITIANS ENCOUNTER, THE SISTERS AGREE THAT THEY ALSO POSSESS A SEEMINGLY BOTTOMLESS WELL-SPRING OF FAITH.”

*continued from page 5*

sisters for shorter-term stints to help with special projects. Sisters Eleanor Joseph Peck and Nora McCarthy are among those who have spent a few months there so far. “Sister Fidelis and I are so indebted to our Aston sisters for their support,” said Sister Jo. “We are so blessed to have them with us.”

The mission in Ferrier is one that responds in multiple ways to the needs of the people. Projects include efforts to provide clean drinking water, agricultural aid, medical care, education, skills training, and leadership development.

### Empowering The People

The sisters who have experienced life in Haiti say it is hard to explain the depth of the poverty there. “It is difficult for people to accomplish anything—even when they have the best of intentions,” said Sister Fidelis who began the mission in Ferrier twelve years ago. “Most of the people are concerned with day to day existence. All their efforts go into that—just getting enough for their families to eat, clothes to wear, a semblance of a house to protect them against the weather. They have to travel great distances for health services and, in times of drought, for water. No

education is free, not even in the public schools.”

“All this leads to a deep-seated feeling of helplessness,” said Sister Vicky. “It is hard for people to believe they can be in charge when everything from the government to nature itself constantly is putting them down.”

These factors make it difficult for people in villages like Ferrier to make the leap to tackling problems as a community and working together to get things done. The sisters' approach to empowering villagers to do just that has been the development of a group known as KPA (Kreyten Pwogre Ansanm, which translates as Christians Progress Together). The group is composed of about 40 Haitians representing 16 villages. KPA members bring their communities together to identify needs and then work with the sisters to set and accomplish their goals. The sisters help them find funding—either through grants or private contributions—and support them along the way.

A five-member team made up of Haitians leads KPA. Each week they meet with the sisters to discuss their various projects, finances, needs, and problems. They



◄ Dr. Patt, head of the medical team, treats a young man with a severe burn on his back. The man endured eight days with his shirt stuck to his back while waiting for the medical team to arrive. ▼ A large crowd of people gather at the clinic in Abriko to seek treatment from the medical team.







*Agricultural development and water management are vital parts of the sisters' mission in Ferrier. An ongoing drought is at the heart of the problem of food and water scarcity in the region. That, along with rocky, mountainous terrain and a string of natural disasters have made poor harvests and loss of livestock a constant crisis.*

also meet with the larger KPA group to exchange information and formulate plans. "The leadership of KPA is superb," said Sister Fidelis. "They have taken over many of the responsibilities that the other sisters and I once had. For example, they plan and conduct the monthly meeting of delegates. We only drop in occasionally."

After Hurricane Sandy, it was impossible to rebuild all the houses that were destroyed. Members of KPA determined who had the greatest need. They chose the 40 most ravaged homes and began putting the money they had toward working on those. "It is important to help the people see that they can make a difference," said Sister Eleanor. "We support them but allow them to make the decisions and do the work themselves as much as they can."

## Addressing Immediate Needs

With water scarcity at the top of everyone's list of concerns, the sisters and KPA members have initiated a project for building cisterns in locations where many people can access them. KPA members oversee both the building of the cisterns and the ongoing supervision required to help keep water-borne disease at bay. When these cisterns run dry, the next good water source is ten miles away—a three to four hour walk.

The sisters are also connected with Water Missions International, a nonprofit Christian engineering organization providing sustainable, safe water and sanitation solutions for people in developing countries through the planning and fundraising efforts of Dr. Ben Fredrick of Hershey, Pennsylvania. Members of the organization came recently and drilled four wells, none

of which came up with water. They hope to try again but the operation is costly.

Such disappointments are common in Ferrier. KPA recently spent some of its precious money on bean seeds only to lose most of the plants to heat and lack of water. Still, some agricultural progress is being made. A local farmer was recently able to attend an agricultural training program as the result of funding provided by the sisters. The idea was not only to train him, but also to have him return to the village and instruct others on the techniques he learned in the course. Although some people were reluctant at first to change the way they had been doing things for generations, the newly educated farmer eventually was able to convince folks to implement techniques such as fertilization and crop rotation.

*continued on page 8*



► Father Parnel (top left) joins the students of St. Francis of Assisi School for their morning assembly. The children place their hands over their hearts as they prepare to sing the Haitian Pledge of Allegiance.



*continued from page 7*

Educational efforts are also important in the area of health. KPA members wrote a proposal which resulted in two grants from Pan American Development Fund totaling \$35,000. The funds made it possible to build a medical center which is open one day a week. However, limited funds restrict the amount of medicine health practitioners can afford to distribute. During the rest of the week, the medical team goes to villages to provide health

education on topics such as cholera and AIDS prevention. In addition, the team offers training sessions for midwives and health monitors at the clinic.

### Training For The Future

Learning English is another area in which knowledge brings empowerment. Although Haitian Creole is the language spoken by the vast majority of Haitians, it is beneficial for Haitian leaders to learn English in order

to communicate with English-speaking people who come to provide aid. Sister Vicky teaches English to anyone interested in learning, including KPA members, the medical team from the clinic, children in the mission's primary school, pupils at St. Francis of Assisi School in Pestel, and even a group of high school students who walk an hour each way to come to her classes. "There is not much knowledge of English among the people but there is a desire for English," said Sister Vicky. "People see that



*Sisters Fidelis and Vicky visit with a family to help repair their home. The simple hut is typical of homes in the village which generally have thatched roofs and dirt floors.*





*A family welcomes a new baby, born at home with the help of a midwife. Midwife training is a key element in the prevention of infant mortality in the region where medical care is extremely limited and almost all children are born at home.*



*The Haitian people's spirits were buoyed when Mr. and Miss World visited Pestel and its surrounding villages. The visit was part of Miss World's Beauty with a Purpose program which raised \$500,000 to be used to improve medical facilities and provide clean drinking water for rural areas of Haiti.*

it is important for success, for their ability to communicate with people who come to help.”

“Sister Vicky’s English class has really helped me,” said Banave Suprien. “I go two times every week and I love my class. It is important for people in this country to learn English.”

The vast majority of rural Haitians don’t have access to this kind of education. In fact, many are unable to attend even the public schools because they can’t afford shoes, uniforms, or books. Those who are able to enroll find that much of the learning there is done by rote. Sister Jo tells the story of visiting such a school and having an eighteen year old ask to read something to her. When she sat down with him, she noticed that the book he “read” from was upside-down. “He knew what was on the page but he wasn’t reading it,” said Sister Jo.

At the mission’s school, St. Rose de Lima, teachers provide basic skills with an emphasis on comprehension. Thirty children are enrolled in the school which encompasses first and second grades. Because some of the teachers at St. Rose de Lima have not completed formal educational training themselves, the sisters provide ongoing professional education to ensure an enriching environment for both the Haitian teachers and their students.

## Keeping The Faith

Despite all the deprivation the Haitians encounter, the sisters agree that they also possess a seemingly bottomless wellspring of faith. Ferrier has a chapel where the people gather for communal prayer. Since there are only two priests who minister

among all the villages of Pestel, Sister Fidelis serves as the chapel’s director, leading services and holding parish meetings.

The spirit of the church is very uplifting. One particular Sunday, villagers entered the chapel speaking about recent storms that had destroyed their crops and killed their animals. At once the assistant director of the chapel, a local villager, started the service with an inspirational sermon. “Before you knew it, everyone was standing and clapping, singing their praise to God,” said Sister Vicky. “‘Mesi, Bondye. Mesi!’—‘Thank you, God. Thank you.’”

That kind of devotion is part of the very fabric of the Haitian people insist the sisters—the thing that keeps them going through earthquakes and hurricanes, droughts and floods. “The gift of Haiti is the faith of the people,” said Sister Jo. “In the mornings we hear farmers working in their fields and singing praises to God. They are happy to have the day they have been given.”

According to Sister Vicky, that is an outlook the Haitian people have helped reinforce in her. “No matter what happens to them, the people of Haiti trust and thank God,” said Sister Vicky. “Witnessing their faith despite their troubles has been a blessing and a delight.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for the people of Haiti who face hunger, thirst, lack of adequate medical care, and limited access to education.
- Utilize social media to spread the word about the continuing needs in Haiti. Although the plight of the Haitians was heavily publicized after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake, many people may not realize how dire the conditions in the country remain, even four years after the disaster.
- Donate supplies. A number of organizations collect provisions ranging from school supplies to medical equipment to be used by the people of Haiti.
- Volunteer your time in Haiti. Help is needed on the ground, particularly from individuals with medical and dental training.
- Use the attached envelope to make a monetary contribution to the Sisters of St. Francis’ mission in Haiti.





*Sister Esther Anderson emphasized the fact that Franciscan-based values provide students with a way of life—and not simply with facts and statistics.*



## PENNSYLVANIA

Neumann University celebrates Charter/Sponsorship Day every year but the March 12, 2014 celebration assumed special significance—the university's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The day began with liturgy in Our Lady of Angels Convent Chapel followed by a special luncheon. The afternoon program featured the traditional Dr. Dorothy A. P. Leunissen Presidential Lecture. This year's presenter was Sister Esther Anderson, congregational minister for the Sisters of St. Francis, who addressed the topic, "Education in the Franciscan Tradition: A Journey of Celebration." Sister Esther described the congregation's early efforts in creating an institution of higher education based on Franciscan traditions and the role of sponsorship of the university today. "We believe that sponsorship provides an opportunity for us to express and extend the mission and values of our congregation," she explained. "It enables us to impact public policy with gospel values that promote peace, justice, and reconciliation." One of many significant outcomes of the founders' dream is the Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies which was endowed by the congregation "to ensure that the vision and values of St. Francis, St. Clare, and the early Franciscans permeate the campus community and that the Franciscan tradition which emphasizes respect for individuals, concern for the environment, and social responsibility is appropriately integrated into the curriculum."

## 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.*

## MARYLAND

The Catholic High School of Baltimore, one of our sponsored ministries, is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In March many of our sisters joined the school community for a special celebratory assembly. After an opening prayer and liturgical dance interpretation of the hymn, "Let Your Light Shine," Dr. Barbara Nazelrod spoke about her own connection with the school, both as an alumna and currently as school president. She presented the congregation with a beautiful statue of St. Francis which will be placed in the school garden in recognition of the sisters' contributions. Former principals, Sisters John Catherine Rohe, Mary Catherine Lewandowski, and Janet Thiel, were recognized for their individual contributions. Students played an active



*Sister Angela DeFontes, both a TCHS graduate and a former faculty member, shared a reflection focused on the image of light and the school's motto, "Lux tua luceat."*

role throughout the assembly, entertaining guests with presentations by the concert choir, symphonic band, and student ensemble choir. The assembly closed with an impressive lighting ceremony illustrating the powerful effect of hundreds of tiny individual lights within the darkened auditorium. The entire program evidenced the values and ideals that are, and have been, part of the school's history—its founders, its faculty, and the young women who continue its history.





▲ Sisters Jean Rupertus and Maria Orlandini help to sort prizes for a game of Bingo at Anna's Place.



▲ Sister Jean Rupertus organized volunteers of all ages to assist with a community garden at Anna's Place.

## PENNSYLVANIA

The initial phase of renovations at Assisi House in Aston is completed and the sisters are enjoying the new, improved, and “homey” atmosphere. Visitors entering the residence are likely to find a group of sisters gathered around a table sharing the newspaper or relaxing in comfortable chairs in front of the hearth. In each of the living areas, the former nurses’ station has been replaced by a small desk and work station. Sisters gather in either the newly furnished living room or stop in the country kitchen to prepare a cup of tea and a snack. Across the hall in the new laundry room, a few sisters and staff are at work at the easily accessible washers and dryers. All in all, it seems that the movement from medical to person-centered model is well underway!



## PENNSYLVANIA

Sister Jean Rupertus received the Humanitarian Award presented by the Delaware County Athletes Hall of Fame. The award is presented to “athletes and sports-oriented persons who have aided, assisted, or contributed time to humanitarian or charitable agencies.” Although the program booklet described Sister Jean as an outstanding high school athlete, the summary’s focus was on her past ministries with the Ministry of Caring and Project H.O.M.E., her efforts on behalf of developing countries in Central and South America, and her current ministry

as program director of Anna’s Place in Chester. In accepting the award, Sister Jean acknowledged those who support and assist her in ministry—her congregation, family, and coworkers—as well as the men and women with whom she has ministered over the years whose courage in turning their lives around has inspired her. “These are the people who have been and continue to be my mentors and spiritual guides,” she said. “It is an honor for me to accept the Humanitarian Award in their names.”



## UNITED STATES

The week of March 8-14 witnessed a “first” with the celebration of National Catholic Sisters Week. The inaugural event—part of an ongoing project funded by the Hilton Foundation—included a weekend gathering of sisters and college students at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. The program provided opportunities for young women to learn about religious life and to share ideas on using social media to promote vocations. During the week social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter shared—and

continue to share—updates about the activities of various congregations of women religious. The Hilton Foundation is also funding a global reporting project under the auspices of the *National Catholic Reporter*. Additional programs designed to support and publicize the work and contributions of women religious are also in progress. Sister Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, Hilton’s Catholic Sisters Initiative program director, explained, “The Hilton Foundation’s vision is to create a movement that ignites national awareness around the lives and profound contributions of sisters, inspiring girls and women to be open to a potential call to religious life.”

► Sisters Jean Margaret McDevitt, Betty Kane, and Ann Marie Slavin responded to a request on National Catholic Sisters Week Facebook page for a photo of sisters summarizing women religious in one word.





# Neighborhood House: Healing *and*



Having successfully earned her GED with the help of the prep program at Neighborhood House, Cynthia works with Sister Noreen to prepare for college courses. "Cynthia's success has drawn other people into the program," said Sister Noreen. "She has become a beacon of light."



# Built On Compassion

“THE IDEA IS TO BE MORE THAN JUST A STOP GAP FOR PEOPLE.  
WE WANT TO EMPOWER PEOPLE TO GET TO THE NEXT LEVEL.”

A pregnant woman in her mid-twenties sits down with a tutor for the first time at Neighborhood House in Charleston, South Carolina. With a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education and a baby on the way, she knows she needs to move forward with her education and find a way to support herself and the child who will soon depend on her. Within minutes of sitting down with volunteer GED tutor Rick Ferencz, however, she is overwhelmed by a task that seems too daunting. “I don’t know why I’m here,” she tells Rick as she looks at the opening pages of the math workbook. “I don’t remember anything.”

Rick encourages her to persevere, suggesting that they just see what she recognizes on the first page and take it from there. Slowly at first, and then more swiftly, things start to come back to her. By the second hour, they are 30 pages into the first workbook and Rick can see the young woman coming alive.

Sister Noreen Buttimer cheers her on, then moves on to check the progress of other students. This GED program which Sister Noreen launched in October of 2008 is one of many services provided at Neighborhood House. In addition to the GED program, Sister Noreen oversees a senior program as well as computer, sewing, and crocheting classes. The center also houses a soup kitchen, a clothes closet, and an array of other services.

## At the Heart of the Matter

Established in 1915 by the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, Neighborhood House brings nearly a century of service to the Charleston community. Located just fifteen blocks from the city’s charming and well-heeled downtown district, Neighborhood House sits within the four by eight block area known as the East Side. Despite recent efforts toward revitalization, the East Side that many residents know is

one filled with poverty and blight. Open air drug markets thrive among a sprawling collection of low-slung, brick public housing apartments dating from the 1930s. Many families here have been on welfare for generations. The homeless are visible on nearly every street. “There are so many issues to overcome for people in this neighborhood,” said Neighborhood House director Nikki Grimbball. “The employment rate in this area is dismal. Education levels are low. Addiction is prevalent. Many young people are functionally illiterate.”

It is these folks on whom Neighborhood House sets its sights, hoping to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty that plagues the area. Sister Noreen says that means helping people address their basic needs first so they can move on to focusing on the bigger picture. “To start, we try to get them some stability—making sure they have food to eat, directing them to drug

*continued on page 14*



*Nurse Annette explains how to read nutrition labels and how food affects diabetics. The information is especially valuable for clients at Neighborhood House, many of whom suffer from diabetes and heart disease.*



*Volunteer Rick Ferencz tutors a woman for her GED exam. He is one of the many dedicated volunteers who are so important to the GED tutoring program that Sister Noreen began in 2008.*



*The crocheting class at Neighborhood House is a popular activity. Participants make afghans and scarves, keeping some for themselves and donating others to the homeless.*



Located in the East Side area of Charleston, Neighborhood House is surrounded by open air drug markets, poverty, and blight.



◀ Sister Noreen serves breakfast to seniors. The soup kitchen at Neighborhood House serves an average of 120 people a day. In addition to its regular food program, Neighborhood House partners with 30 local restaurants to provide restaurant-quality food to diners several times a week.

In addition to the food program, Neighborhood House runs a clothing center that distributes hundreds of items each week—everything from casual clothes to outfits suitable for job interviews. A laundry program for the homeless provides laundromat vouchers so people can keep their new clothing clean.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Keep the poor and marginalized in your daily prayers.
- Learn about and experience the issues surrounding poverty from those who live it. Volunteer regularly at a soup kitchen and take the time to get to know the people who come through the line.
- Become a GED tutor in your own community. Tutors are urgently needed in many areas and your assistance can help others to reach their full potential.
- Utilize your special skills to start a free class for those who are poor and homeless. Whether it is painting, knitting, singing, or yoga, enriching activities can have a profound impact on individuals struggling with poverty, addiction, and homelessness.
- Use the enclosed envelope to make a donation to our sisters' ministries which serve those who are poor and/or homeless.



*Sister Noreen and Nikki Grimbball help Leaf restaurant owner Pierre Estoppey to plate the meal provided by his eatery.*

*continued from page 13*  
abuse programs, getting them medical assistance, and helping them find housing," she said.

Sister Noreen spends her lunchtimes in the Neighborhood House soup kitchen, serving and socializing with the clients who come each day for a mid-day meal. The program is much more than a mess hall, though. In addition to its more typical fare, the Neighborhood House food program serves meals provided by some 30 Charleston restaurants with which it collaborates. Each week, one or two of these partners donate food, chefs, and wait staff to provide a restaurant-quality experience to Neighborhood House diners. Neighborhood House also works with a group of dieticians who conduct classes on nutrition, help people identify ways to alter their food budget to allow for a healthier diet, and demonstrate healthy cooking methods.

## Beyond Physical Needs

It may be food and clothing assistance that bring people through the doors at Neighborhood House but those who come soon find that the center provides much more than that. "The idea is to be more than just a stop gap for people," said Sister Noreen. "We want to empower people to get to the next level."

For many clients that means enrollment in Sister Noreen's GED program where individualized tutoring allows students to move at their own pace. Plenty of obstacles remain for those hoping to pass the test, however. The majority of students are single mothers. Some never even made it to high school. Many are battling addiction.

Sister Noreen welcomes them all but she also expects a lot of them. Many clients, unaccustomed to keeping to a strict schedule, show up late at first, slogging through the mornings half-asleep. They soon learn that Sister Noreen insists on a higher level of dedication. Classes start promptly at nine A.M. and students are expected to be on time and ready to learn. Buoyed by such high expectations, most students adjust their behavior within a few weeks.

"You see the change fairly quickly," said Rick Ferencz who has been volunteering as a tutor for the past two years. "The students make more of an effort to be on time, to dress better. Then we start to see their confidence grow. Passing the test goes from something they think will never happen to a real possibility."

## Overcoming Obstacles

Cynthia came to Neighborhood House three years ago at the age of 47. She told Sister Noreen that she wanted to have her GED by the time she turned 50. At first Cynthia only showed up intermittently. Sister Noreen decided to find out why. As it turned out, Cynthia was doing drugs. She also was suffering from an extremely painful dental infection and was having trouble reading because of failing eyesight. Sister Noreen began by getting her dental care, having her fitted for glasses, and encouraging her to confront her drug problem. Then Sister Noreen began challenging Cynthia to become more committed to her studies.

“When I first came, I had a drug problem and a big chip on my shoulder,” said Cynthia. “But Sister Noreen chipped away at the chip. She prayed for me and she had my back. If she didn’t see me, she would call. That kept me clean.”

Before long, Cynthia began showing up for class regularly and on time. Eventually she became the first of Sister Noreen’s GED students to pass the test—and she did it before her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. “Sister Noreen is a little hard on us at times but it’s because she loves us,” said Cynthia. “She demands a lot but I am where I am because of her.”

The day Cynthia received her diploma in the mail, it was Sister Noreen she called first. Today Cynthia is enrolling in the culinary program at the local community college.

## Moving Toward A Better Future

With mornings dedicated to GED preparation, afternoons at Neighborhood House focus on other pursuits. Classes on computers, budgeting, even crocheting and sewing enrich the education of Neighborhood House’s clients.

Neighborhood House’s finance director offers budgeting classes that are required of everyone who receives financial assistance from the center. For Cynthia who is trying to juggle work, school, and caring for her elderly mother on a limited income, those classes have been very helpful. “We are in a one-bedroom apartment right now,” said Cynthia. “My mother sleeps in the bed-

room and I sleep on the couch in the living room. I am working toward moving to a two-bedroom place but I’m staying with what I can afford for now. I’m not letting anything stop me from getting enrolled in school.”

Sister Noreen teaches the crocheting class. Students learn the basics before moving on to making scarves and even afghans. Some they keep for themselves. Others go to the local homeless population or back to Sister Noreen for sale in her congregation’s retirement convent’s gift shop. “Being able to give back makes people feel good,” said Sister Noreen. “It gives them a sense of self-worth.”

## The Personal Touch

Certainly the skills gained at Neighborhood House go a long way toward making clients feel good. Still, those who know Sister Noreen insist that her presence has a lot to do with the sense of warmth and possibil-

ity that fills the place. “Sister Noreen takes to heart the needs of the people. They see she cares. They trust her,” said Nikki. “The investment Sister Noreen makes in people makes people invest in themselves.”

Despite the travails facing so many Neighborhood House clients, the regulars find ways to let Sister Noreen know what that kind of support means to them. On Sister Noreen’s most recent birthday, the clients organized a surprise pot luck to celebrate. “We wanted to show her some of the love she shows us,” said Cynthia. “We wanted her to feel that love.”

According to Sister Noreen, the message is getting through. “Here among those who are really poor, I have seen some of the greatest acts of kindness and sharing,” said Sister Noreen. “Even among all the struggles and strife, this is the most life-giving ministry I have ever experienced.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).



*Art classes at Neighborhood House provide a much-needed creative outlet for clients, allowing them to relax and express themselves in new ways.*



# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

—Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)

## 2013 Annual Report Sisters of St. Francis Foundation

*This year's annual report is an example of your generous support of our ministries. With renewed inspiration we continue to pray for you and all you hold dear. This report shows how your donations have been distributed.*

*With heartfelt gratitude the Sisters of St. Francis*

# Thank You

*for your continued support.  
Your generosity enables us to respond to the needs  
of our brothers and sisters.*

A 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was held on Thursday, March 20 to honor the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and the students of The Catholic High School of Baltimore. A statue of St. Francis was given as a gift to Sister Esther Anderson, congregational minister, and the Sisters of St. Francis. The statue will be placed in the garden at Catholic High in their honor.

*Beautiful performances were given by Catholic High Liturgical dancers, orchestra, symphonic band, and concert choir.*



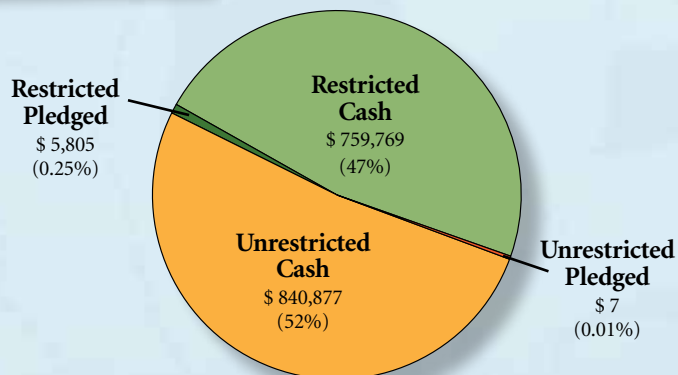
*Sister Mary Catherine Lewandowski, past principal of Catholic High, was also acknowledged.*

**Total Donations: \$ 1,606,458**

**Restricted: \$ 765,574 (48%)**

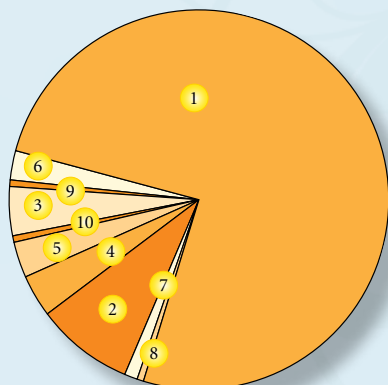
**Unrestricted: \$ 840,884 (52%)**

**Sources of Donations:** Raffle, Golf Outing, Direct Mail Appeals, Good News, E-News, Memorial Gifts, Memorial Cards, Grants, Recurring Gifts, Website Donations, Estates and Inheritances, and Capital Campaign Pledges.



*The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia assume operational costs of the foundation.*

## Distribution of Ministry: Unrestricted \$ 840,884

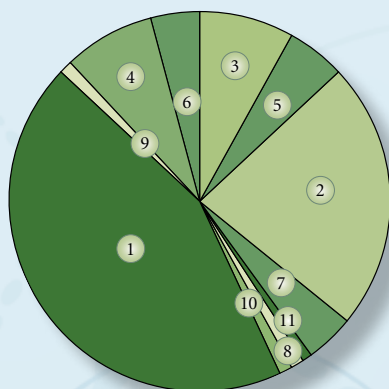


- 1 Assisi House Renovation \$ 635,000 (75.52%)
- 2 The Catholic High School of Baltimore \$ 70,000 (8.32%)
- 3 Drexel Neumann Academy \$ 35,000 (4.16%)
- 4 St. Joseph Family Counseling Center \$ 30,000 (3.57%)
- 5 Mother Seton Academy \$ 25,000 (1.40%)
- 6 Anna's Place \$ 20,000 (2.38%)
- 7 Transitions \$ 10,000 (1%)
- 8 Undistributed \$ 5,884 (0.70%)
- 9 Dawn's Place \$ 5,000 (0.59%)
- 10 Hispanic Ministry of Delaware County, PA \$ 5,000 (0.59%)



▲ The Sisters of St. Francis continue to partner with the Sylvania Franciscan Sisters to help rebuild Haiti. Our Haitian brothers and sisters are grateful for your support.

## Distribution of Ministry: Restricted \$ 765,574



- 1 Assisi House Bus and Windows \$ 339,337 (44%)
- 2 Shelter & Social Ministries \$ 177,971 (23%)
- 3 Assisi House \$ 60,031 (8%)
- 4 Retirement Fund \$ 59,260 (8%)
- 5 Foreign Ministries \$ 38,130 (5%)
- 6 St. Ann Convent \$ 31,445 (4%)
- 7 Education \$ 31,249 (4%)
- 8 TCHS \$ 11,208 (1%)
- 9 Spiritual Ministries \$ 7,310 (1%)
- 10 Parish Ministries \$ 5,543 (1%)
- 11 Memorial Garden \$ 4,090 (1%)

### Explanation of Restricted Categories

**TCHS:** The Catholic High School of Baltimore; **Spiritual Ministries:** Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA; Franciscan Spiritual Center, Portland, OR; **Parish Ministries:** OLA Chapel, OSF caregivers, parish ministries, Sr. E. Horneman & Sr. M. Culhane ministries, St. Anthony (Baltimore), Vocations; **Assisi House:** Assisi House bus, Assisi House windows, Assisi House renovation; **Retirement:** Retirement, St. Ann Convent, Assisi House; **Memorial Garden:** trees, benches, bricks, and pergola; **Foreign Ministries:** Africa, Haiti; **Shelter and Social Ministries:** Anna's Place, childcare (Wilmington, DE), Committee for Responsible Investment (CRI), Dawn's Place; East Bay Sanctuary, farm ministry, Hurricane Sandy victims, human trafficking, peace and justice fund, Philadelphia Catholic Social Services, St. Mary Franciscan Shelter, prison ministries (Baltimore, MD), St. Joseph Family Counseling Center, discretionary fund for the poor; **Education:** Drexel Neumann Academy, Mother Seton Academy, Neumann University.



## In Memoriam

Sister St. Francis Coco  
January 26, 2014

Sister Ann Nederostek  
(formerly Sister Marina)  
January 31, 2014

Sister Marguerite Grueter  
(formerly Sister Mary Leo)  
February 3, 2014

Sister Regina Anne LaSorte  
February 15, 2014

Sister Kathleen Patricia McDonagh  
(formerly Sister Etheldreda)  
April 3, 2014

Sister John Catherine Rohe  
April 9, 2014

Sister Martha Joseph Rooney  
May 2, 2014

Sister Joella Matt  
May 16, 2014

*Therefore, every dollar that our donors give is used solely for the ministries and retirement.*



► *Barbara Nazelrod, Ph.D., president of the Catholic High School of Baltimore, was named one of Maryland's Top 100 Women for 2014.*



# FoCUS

## BARBARA NAZELROD, PH.D.

"THE STRONGER OUR  
TRADITIONS, ACADEMICS,  
AND VALUES, THE STRONGER  
WE WILL BE IN THE FUTURE."

▼ *Barbara considers it a privilege to "work each day for the perpetuity of the school I love and to fulfill its mission in each student."*

When Barbara Nazelrod was a student at the Catholic High School of Baltimore, she knew she wanted to teach—even wondered if she *might* teach at Catholic High. But to become the school's president was something she never imagined! However, in 2001 Barbara learned that the school was looking for a president. She submitted a resume and letter of interest, was interviewed and offered the position—and declined! "I was miserable," she recalled. "Two days later I called, asked if I could still have the job. The rest is history!" That decision was, indeed, a beneficial one both for Barbara and for the school. The Franciscan mission—one that Barbara learned both in elementary school and high school—is what drives her each day whether she is meeting with the administrative team or overseeing academic issues and school activities. "I believe Catholic High is very mission-centric," she explained. "We use our mission of empowering our young women as the barometer for so many things: the way we interact with each other, the academic programs we offer. The stronger our traditions, academics, and values, the stronger we will be in the future."

Sister Anne Patrice Hefner, director of mission at Catholic High, attests to Barbara's emphasis on mission. "Each day Barb strives to live our mission of 'empowering women to transform society,'" Sister Anne explained. "Our staff and students look to her as someone who motivates others to do their best." Sister Anne Lupita McNamara, director of sponsorship for the Sisters of St. Francis, agrees. "Dr. Nazelrod believes in and is committed to the mission, vision, and values of Catholic High," she said. "Her enthusiasm is significant in the leadership she demonstrates and in her forward thinking. She is recognized by her peers as a person who reads the 'signs of the times' and responds with innovative programs to address the challenges."

As Catholic High celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Barbara believes that the founding sisters would be proud of the way the school continues to live out its founding mission. "We continue to be an inclusive school in that we accept a wide academic range of students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds," she explained. "We have academic programs to suit a variety of learners and we make funding available to assist our young women." Considering the relationship between those founding sisters and the school today, Barbara added. "We are their continued and enduring presence each day of our ministry at Catholic High."

◀ *When she's not busy at Catholic High, Barbara enjoys spending time with her mother, her brothers and sisters, and nieces and nephews.*



# Let's Hear From You!

- \_\_\_\_ Please add my name to the mailing list for *Good News*. (This is a secure list to which no other mail will be sent unless you request to receive information.)
- \_\_\_\_ I am receiving duplicate copies of *Good News*. Enclosed is the address label that contains the mailing address to be removed from your mailing list. (Mail card and address label in envelope.)
- \_\_\_\_ Please remove my name from the mailing list; I no longer wish to receive *Good News*.
- \_\_\_\_ Please add my email to your e-list so I can receive my copy electronically. In addition, please remove my address from your hard copy list.
- \_\_\_\_ Please send a copy of *Good News* to the following individual:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Select areas of interest to receive information about the congregation.

- ☐ Companion Program ☐ Franciscan Spiritual Centers (select one): ☐ Aston, PA ☐ Milwaukie, OR
- ☐ Community Supported Agriculture: Red Hill Farm, Aston PA ☐ Sisters of St. Francis Foundation ☐ Vocations



### Join Our E-News Mailing List!

Visit [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org) to sign-up. It only takes a minute to enter your email address to receive prayerful, entertaining, and informative e-news from the Sisters of St. Francis twice per month.



## Join us!



Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



SrsofStFrancis

Link directly to our pages from our website homepage: [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)

## SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

### A New Offering for Remembering Loved Ones

Throughout the years the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation has offered several ways of remembering or honoring loved ones: planting a tree in a person's name, having a brick installed on the garden path inscribed with a person's name, and donating a teak bench with an inscribed nameplate attached.

### Introducing our newest opportunity!

A liturgical vestment can be purchased and donated as a memorial for a deceased loved one or to honor a special occasion such as a wedding, anniversary, etc. The name(s) of the person(s) being honored or remembered will be stitched inside the vestment. Some vestments are used daily, others weekly, and still others for a particular season or special feast day. The colors of the vestments correspond to the liturgical year: green for Ordinary time, white and gold for special feasts and Christmas and Easter time, red for Pentecost or to honor a martyr, purple for Lent and Advent. The choices are limitless as are the designs of the robes and the various materials used to create them.

If you are interested in learning more about this type of memorial or remembrance, please contact Sr. Kathleen Parisi, at (610) 558-7714, or email [kparisi@osfphila.org](mailto:kparisi@osfphila.org).



This is one example of many styles available.

Chagall Design Ltd - Vestments / [www.chagalldesign.com](http://www.chagalldesign.com)

### Honorarium or Memorial Gifts for Family, Friends, and Sisters

- ☐ Liturgical Vestment.
- ☐ Memorial Cards (Please send me a sample starter packet.)
- ☐ Send me information about memorial gifts in the Canticle Gardens (Aston, PA).
- |                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Benches—\$600, \$1100, \$1600 | Bricks—\$100         |
| Pergola Plaques—\$500, \$1000 | Trees—\$100 to \$250 |

### Invitation

- ☐ I would like to arrange a visit to the motherhouse and Canticle Garden(s) in Aston, PA.
- ☐ I would appreciate a visit from a Sister of St. Francis to discuss including the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in my will.

Please tear out this page and mail completed to:

GOOD NEWS, Communications Office, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014-1207

Visit us online at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org) or call us at (610) 558-7726



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



See our website at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ROYERSFORD, PA  
PERMIT NO. 539

## Advocacy: Giving Voice to the Needs of Others

Our sisters continue their involvement in a number of advocacy efforts. In March a group of approximately 60 people gathered in our motherhouse chapel for a Mini-Sabbath ritual memorializing the 32 people from Delaware County who were victims of gun violence in 2013. The service was one of many similar vigils held in churches, synagogues, and mosques throughout the country. The gatherings were organized by Heeding God's Call, a national organization drawing attention to the problem of gun violence. Speakers included Bryan Miller, executive director of Heeding God's Call, Movita Johnson-Harrell, and Rev. David Townsend, all of whom lost family members because of gun violence.

In April three of our sisters joined others as part of Fast4Families. They visited the offices of several local politicians and in each visit shared an urgent message: "Don't wait! Vote for compassionate immigration reform!" Their last stop was Villanova University where, with an even larger group, they gathered on the steps of St. Thomas of Villanova Church. In a sharing of individual stories and an interfaith prayer service, the group experienced—in spite of rain, cold, and a long day of fasting—a sense of becoming a living organism in their combined efforts to achieve comprehensive immigration reform.

► During the Mini-Sabbath, participants created a poignant memorial commemorating the 23 men, women, and children who were victims of gun violence and whose shoes will never be filled.



▲ In 1999 Sister Bonnie Pelloux, seen here administering an eye exam to a young Haitian girl, organized one of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia's first medical mission trips to Haiti. Sister Bonnie was one of six sisters to travel to Haiti that April. ▼ (Top row: Sisters Patricia Novak, Christine Still, and Jeanne Nisley. Bottom row: Sisters Bonnie Pelloux, Regina Dalton, and Theresa Lamkin). The team's primary endeavor while in Port-au-Prince was to operate an eye clinic—performing eye exams and distributing thousands of pairs of eyeglasses that were all donated, sterilized, and sorted by retired Sisters of St. Francis in both Tacoma and Philadelphia. In addition to the eye clinic, the sisters also worked alongside a priest/doctor serving those who were desperately poor and suffering from tuberculosis, AIDS, and cancer. Once again our sisters have been called to minister to the people of Haiti, where the need is greatest. Read about Sister Vicky Della Valle's current ministry in Haiti on page 4.



◀ Sisters Dominica LoBianco, Hope Bauerlin, and Betty Kane joined Fast4Families in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform.

