

Volume 18.2 Summer 2015

Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Also in this issue:

- Daring to Change: Transitions Offers Women A Second Chance
- People & Places
- Foundation Annual Report



Always an Educator:

A Life Changing Legacy of Love

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

As I read the two articles for this issue of Good News, the words of Jesus came to my mind: I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). This scripture text points to the fact that our God desires our personal growth and transformation. This is not achieved once and for all. Rather, it is an ongoing process. In this issue of Good News, we read about Transitions, one of our congregation's cosponsored ministries located in Spokane, Washington. Transitions consists of five programs intended to bring women and children from homelessness to a stable living environment. Each program offers the women support and skills which are intended to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their children. However, more than skills, Transitions provides a loving community, supportive staff, and associates who desire, like Jesus, that these women have life and have it more abundantly. Through the web of trusting relationships, through this community, lives are gradually transformed and those who once were floundering find firm footing, healing, and confidence.



**Sister Mary Kathryn
Dougherty, OSF
Congregational Minister**

Likewise, in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Sister Thomasann Quinn brings a special presence to the children, faculty, and staff of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School. Sister Thomasann's faith and deep spirituality are a beacon of light to all those she meets. She sees the presence of God in everyone and in everything. In moments of difficulty and self-doubt, she helps the students to recognize that they are children of God and that with faith in God and themselves, they can accomplish their goals. In her quality presence to the children, Sister Thomasann is the face of Jesus that quietly says, I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly. In that presence, children thrive and develop to their greatest potential.

In this issue of Good News, we celebrate the transforming power of love and community. May we always strive to be a loving presence and a creator of community so that others may have life and have it more abundantly.

Blessings,

Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



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Transitions, a cosponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in Spokane, Washington, operates five programs designed to provide safety, support, and skills to women and children who are homeless.

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Sister Thomasann Quinn's title may have changed but her love for the students has not faltered. She continues interacting with the children at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Doylestown, planning religious services and activities, and infusing the school with a strong sense of Franciscan charism.

Written by Deb Litman
Photography by Andrea Cipraini-Mecchi

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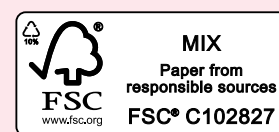
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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the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

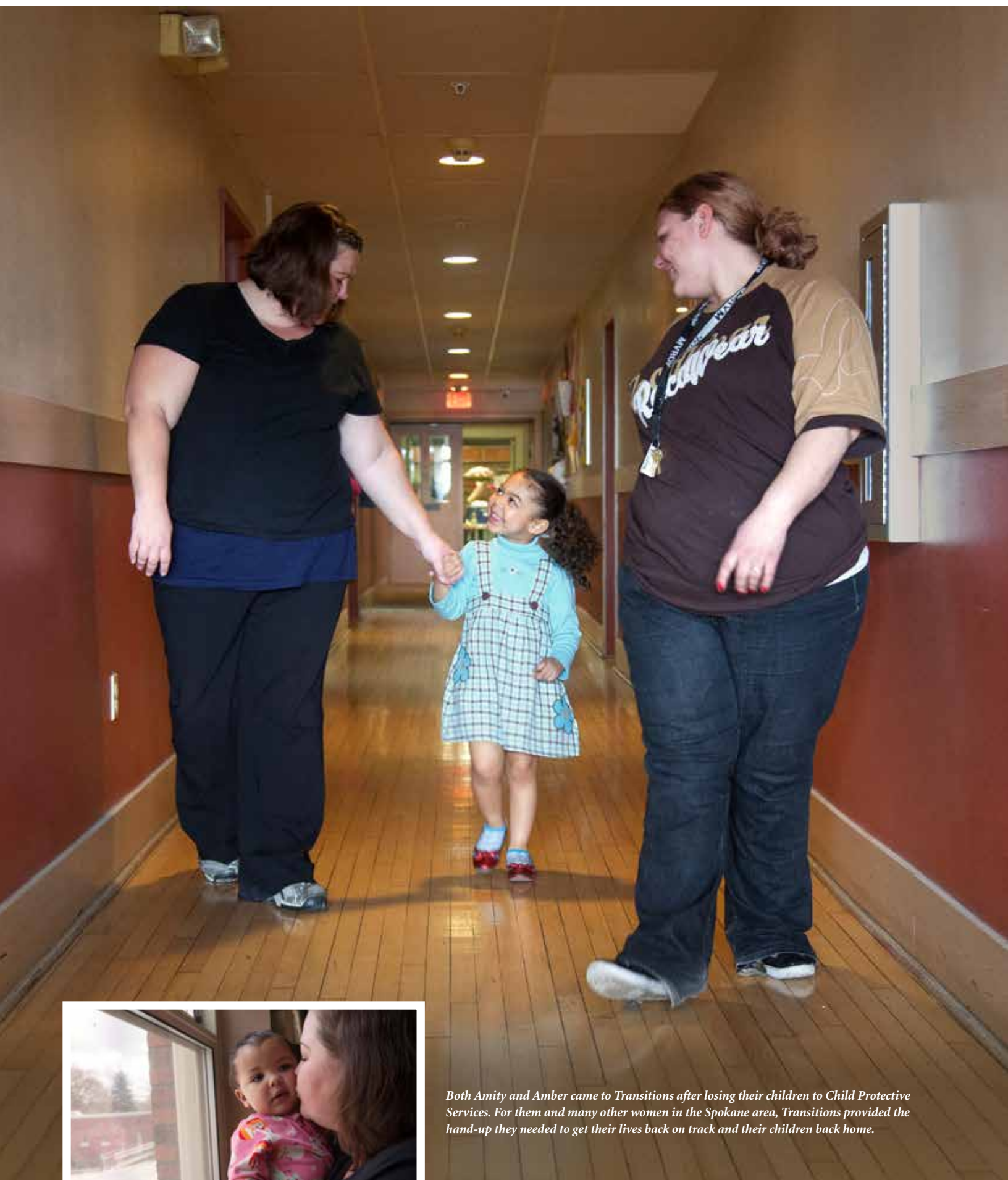
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On the cover: Sister Thomasann Quinn delights in teaching the students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School about the sacraments. A math and science teacher at OLMC for 26 years, Sister Thomasann's duties now center around liturgical education, prayer services, and the spiritual development of the students.



Both Amity and Amber came to Transitions after losing their children to Child Protective Services. For them and many other women in the Spokane area, Transitions provided the hand-up they needed to get their lives back on track and their children back home.

“LAST YEAR MY DAUGHTER HAD AN ANXIETY ATTACK EVERY MORNING... NOW SHE IS HAPPY TO GO [TO SCHOOL] BECAUSE SHE KNOWS I AM GOING TO BE THERE TO PICK HER UP. SHE KNOWS WE ARE GOING TO GO HOME TO THE SAME PLACE, AND SHE KNOWS WHO IS GOING TO BE THERE.”



According to Edie Rice-Bauer, executive director of mission and services, Transitions strives to create an environment where women can thrive. “We work to provide safety, support, and skills to the women who come to us,” said Edie.

Daring *to* Change

Transitions Offers Women a Second Chance

Amity was in a hospital bed when she realized that something in her life had to change. Recuperating after an overdose, she was wondering whether the police had found all the drugs in her home and looked forward to using what she hoped was left. Then someone from Child Protective Services came in and told her they were taking her two children. “That’s when it hit me,” said Amity. “Up until that point, I had convinced myself I didn’t have a problem. When I heard they were taking my kids, I knew I had to do something.”

That something included an inpatient addiction treatment facility, a homeless shelter, and even a stay at a convent—all while her children were in foster care. Eventually it led her to Transitions, a ministry cosponsored by four founding congregations—the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Sisters of Providence, Sisters of the Holy Names, and Spokane Dominicans. Located in Spokane, Washington, Transitions operates five programs designed to provide safety, support, and skills to women and children who are homeless. According to Edie Rice-Sauer, executive director of mission and services at Transitions, the program can trace its mission directly to its sponsoring communities. “We are who we are because of them,” said Edie.

“The mission of the Sisters of St. Francis—care for those who are poor and marginalized—is evidenced daily,” said Sister Anne McNamara, director of sponsorship for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Those served at Transitions face a host of obstacles. Most are homeless. Many have a history of incarceration and/or drug involvement, have lost their children, and have no support from family. Transitions helps these women and their children find their way back to mental and physical health and financial stability.

Transitional Living Center

For Amity, whose first encounter with Transitions was through its Transitional Living Center, the ministry was a path back to reunification with her children and toward her first experience with stability. In addition to providing clothes, toiletries, and an apartment, the Transitional Living Center gave Amity the support she needed to take the next steps toward positive change in her life.

Consisting of 16 one, two, or three bedroom apartments, the center provides women and their children with an opportunity to live together in a stable, supportive environment. Like Amity, many of the women have been without their children for a period of time. The center’s staff

works with the family as a whole providing practical services such as skills training, parenting classes, case management, and an on-site childcare facility which makes day-to-day life easier to manage.

Three weeks after Amity came to the Transitional Living Center, her younger child came home. A month later, her older one followed. Amity found that being back together was a blessing but it wasn’t easy. According to Edie, that experience is typical. “After being apart from a parent for a period of time, a child experiences a sense

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The women who participated in a class at the center entitled “My Past, Present, and Future Me” created paper dolls that represented who they were in the past, how they see themselves now, and who they hope to become. Participants used the dolls as a jumping off point to begin processing and discussing their goals and feelings.

“WE REALLY TRY TO CELEBRATE SIMPLE SUCCESSES LIKE MAKING A GOOD MEAL OR A NEW FRIEND. MANY OF THE WOMEN HAVE CELEBRATED VERY LITTLE IN THEIR LIVES.”

▼ *Scott Randall, lead educator at EduCare, entertains the children at the Transitional Living Center's on-site childcare program. The program provides much-needed childcare for mothers as they pursue work and school opportunities and provides a nurturing and enriching environment for their children.*

of loss and grief,” said Edie. “Parents need to learn to deal with those feelings and the resulting behaviors. Children need time to heal from the trauma of the separation.”

Amity worked on helping her children to feel safe, to have confidence that she was always going to be there for them, and to believe that their new life was something on which they could rely. This meant building trust and establishing and sticking to a routine. “Last year my daughter had an anxiety attack every morning thinking about going to school,” said Amity. “Now she is happy to go because she knows I am going to be there to pick her up. She knows we are going to go home to the same place and she knows who is going to be there.”

Right after Amity’s children returned, she learned she was pregnant. The news seemed like a blow. “I was devastated and distraught,” said Amity. “I felt like I had failed my two existing children. I already believed I hadn’t given them what they deserved and feared that bringing another child into the situation would take away from what they were getting.” But the staff

and residents at the center showed her a different way to look at the news. “I walked into the kitchen crying and Linda Hunt, family support advocate, and some of the other residents were there,” said Amity. “I blurted out what was going on and immediately they gathered around hugging and reassuring me.”

With the help of her newfound support network, Amity came to realize that this was just another part of the journey—not an obstacle that would derail her hard work. “Linda took me into her office for almost two hours,” said Amity. “I left knowing that it was going to be okay.”

Educare

For women at the center, having a safe, caring place for their children to go once they are ready to go back to school or to work is an invaluable resource. The Transitional Living Center’s EduCare program provides a nurturing environment for toddlers, a preschool program, before and after school care, summer programs for school-aged children, and a USDA-funded food pro-



◀ *Miryam's House resident Doris Hayes plays music in her room while her dog, Babe, listens. Pets are welcome at Miryam's House and help contribute to a deep sense of being home for those who live there.*



▲ *Dinner at Miryam's House means gathering family-style for a home cooked meal, a ritual that is new to many of the women there. Sharing meals in this way helps create a sense of community and routine and often becomes a favorite part of the day for residents.*



▲ Transitions board member Sister Pat Millen works a puzzle with Teresa Christensen at Women's Hearth. The drop-in center provides the first experience with Transitions for many of Spokane's women who are homeless. In addition to providing basic services, classes, and referrals, Women's Hearth provides a safe-haven and a sense of community for women who live on the streets.

gram. In addition to working with children on typical educational and social goals, EduCare teachers are specially trained to help youngsters recovering from the trauma of homelessness or reconnecting with their mothers. The teachers also work directly with the moms, teaching healthy parenting strategies and encouraging consistency between the classroom and home.

"I learned in my parenting classes why my children need certain things from me and how to read their cues," said Amber, another resident who was also recently reunited with her two daughters. "I learned that they seek my attention because they have a need to be met, not because they are being bad." The three of them have been living at the Transitional Living Center and utilizing the EduCare programs. Amber said that for the first time she is reading to her children, playing with them, and setting and sticking to a schedule. "I get them to bed on time and get them up for school every day," she said. "I make sure I'm on time to pick them up and we do things together."

Miryam's House

Transitions also offers services for women without children. Miryam's House offers a supportive, nurturing environment for women recovering from crises related to homelessness, abuse, addiction, and displacement. Housing is offered for one year and focuses on promoting permanent changes through healing, learning, and growth toward self-sufficiency and financial stability. Located in a house with nine private rooms and one apartment, the facility creates a home-like environment where the women share their lives and support one another. Residents at Miryam's House take turns cooking and gather together around a communal dining table. "We really try to celebrate simple successes like making a good meal or a new friend," said Edie. "Many of the women have celebrated very little in their lives."

That support for one another can be hard to accept for residents. Amity acknowledged that she experienced similar difficulties at the Transitional Living Center. "I come from

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▲ Sisters Pat Millen and Anne McNamara join Women's Hearth program director Susan Tyler Baskirk for a chat outside the facility. Situated in a storefront in downtown Spokane, the program's location gives women easy access to its services.

▼ Deanna Morgan serves as café manager at New Leaf Bakery Café, a job-training program that blends education, hands-on work experience, and supportive services to help women gain the confidence and skills they need to become self-sufficient.



▲ Chef instructor Kerry Picard (right) teaches Shari Christensen how to prepare scones as part of the New Leaf Bakery Café program.

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a broken home—most of us at Transitions do,” she explained. “I never had unconditional love and support. The one thing that was a constant for me growing up was the knowledge that I couldn’t trust anyone. Being here has taught me that some people are trustworthy and they believe that I can be trustworthy, too.” The philosophy of care at Miryam’s House—and Transitions as a whole—emphasizes an empowerment model of personal responsibility for individual growth along with community and staff support. Putting trust in others and in oneself is just one step in growing as a person and stepping forward into the future.

New Leaf Bakery

At the New Leaf Bakery Café, a Transitions program designed to develop the job skills that are critical to long term success, Amber is also looking toward her future by completing the barista training. The program also provides a six-month curriculum

that prepares women for employment by teaching communication, teamwork, and culinary skills in a commercial kitchen. A professional chef provides 20 hours of hands-on and classroom instruction each week, helping women develop marketable skills and build a solid résumé of work experience. Women in the program prepare and serve food at New Leaf Catering and the New Leaf Café.

In addition to practical instruction in the specific skills required in food services, the program focuses on developing interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, cultivating a solid work ethic, and managing stress. A vocational specialist also works one-on-one with the women, preparing them to look for work and guiding them through the employment search. “At 29, I had never had a job,” said Amber. “I learned a lot at New Leaf and gained a lot of confidence. Now I know I can be successful at a job.” Amber’s increased confidence inspired her to enroll in a flagger certification course—



Katie Busch works in the kitchen preparing food. The New Leaf program helps women develop marketable skills and build a solid resume of work experience.

an eleven week program that will qualify her to get a job doing traffic control at road construction sites.

Women's Hearth

Although Amity and Amber's introduction to Transitions came through the Transitional Living Center, many women learn about the program through Women's Hearth. A drop-in center for women in downtown Spokane, Women's Hearth provides basic services, over 60 classes each month, and connections to the larger community. Just as importantly, it provides a sense of safety and community. "The facilities are very client friendly," said Sister Anne who visits the programs at Transitions regularly and keeps abreast of what is happening there. "The women who come find a safe haven. I've observed women arrive distraught and watched the staff just sit and listen. Before staff members try to determine how the center can help the women to improve their situation, the most important thing is hearing their stories, being present, and meeting each individual wherever she is in her life."

Once the women are ready, 12-step meetings, support groups, life skills classes, arts and crafts sessions, spiritual offerings, a tech center, and access to referrals for vari-



▲ Amber Warne visits with Marilyn Nelson, program director at Transitional Living Center. "Being here has changed my life and my children's lives," said Amber. "I had never felt safe in my home before. Now I feel that my home is truly home."

ous social services help them work toward health and independence. Even as the clients strive to stand on their own two feet, however, the Women's Hearth staff encourages them to lean on those around them. "The women who come here tend to see other women as a threat or as competition," said Edie. "We try to change that by creating a space where women can begin to see one another as allies rather than foes."

Life "After" Transitions

Support does not end after women leave Transitions. Alumnae services provide ongoing assistance for former residents and participants whether or not they completed the program successfully. Devised to help women maintain or achieve stability, the alumnae program continues one-on-one case management, support groups, and socialization activities to increase the chances of lasting success.

Even once they are out on their own, many alumnae choose to stay connected and become volunteers and supporters of Transitions. They often mentor new women coming into the programs, assisting them on their journey of recovery. Amity's own hope is to return to school to finish a degree in social services that she started years ago. Someday she intends to provide the kind of support for others that the staff and clients at Transitions have given her. "I want to give back because I know how much this place has done for me," said Amity. "This place saved my life. It saved my children." ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for women and children who are homeless or who have been separated from one another.
- Volunteer at a shelter or other direct service agency for those who are homeless. Many programs need people to help with tasks such as answering phones, serving food, washing dishes, and sorting and distributing clothing.
- Share your hobbies. Whether your passion is knitting, painting, or yoga, you can be sure that there are people at your local homeless shelter who would enjoy and benefit from your favorite activity as much as you do.
- Donate clothes, shoes, books, and hygiene products to an agency that provides services to people who are homeless. Needs change so check with the staff of your local program to find out which items are in greatest demand.
- Be an advocate. Advocacy is critical to creating the systemic changes needed to end homelessness. Volunteer at your local homeless advocacy coalition and urge public officials to support legislation that seeks to end homelessness.
- Use the attached envelope to make a monetary contribution to Transitions.



A number of our sisters were on hand to congratulate Sisters Maggie Gannon and Cathy McGowan on their reception of the Robert Molyneux Award. (L-R) Sisters Maggie Gannon, Cathy McGowan, Mary Craig, Clare D'Auria, Julie McCole, Nora Nash, Kathy Dougherty, Karen Pourby, Mary Beth Antonelli, Marguerite O'Beirne, Kathleen Gannon, Ave Regina Boos, Mary Vandergeest, and Deborah Krist.

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.

PENNSYLVANIA

During St. Joseph University's Catholic School's Week Award and Lecture, **Sisters Maggie Gannon, OSF, and Cathy McGowan, SSJ**, president and principal of Chester's Drexel Neumann Academy, were honored for their work in education. Both received the Robert Molyneux, SJ, Award. The award is named in honor of the Jesuit priest who, in 1782, established the first parochial school in the U.S. in Philadelphia. Recipients of the award are educators who have made exceptional advances in innovation and efficacy for Catholic schools. Explaining why Maggie and Cathy were chosen for the award, Fr. Daniel R. J. Joyce, SJ, director of the ACESJU Education Fellows program, said "Sister Maggie Gannon and Sister Cathy McGowan have made heroic efforts in maintaining Catholic education as an option for the families of Chester. Against all odds, they have made Drexel Neumann Academy a shining example of cutting edge, innovative education."



IRELAND

Sister Nora Nash was among those chosen for the *Irish Echo's* "2014 Irish Labor 50" honorees. The introductory article to this special edition of the *Irish Echo* carried the headline, "Irish Hands Behind the Building of America." The article went on to describe the types



of contributions made either by Irish immigrants or by Irish Americans. The remainder of the issue carried a photo of each honoree along with a series of interview questions and answers. In addition to her job title and place of birth, Sister Nora was asked about her first job and what it taught her, three things people would be surprised to learn about her, her opinion on the relevance of the labor movement in today's economy, and her opinion on what the labor movement needs to do to adapt to changing times.



PENNSYLVANIA/ MARYLAND

Several years ago the Catholic High School of Baltimore initiated a program to collect tabs from soda cans to help support the Ronald McDonald House project. **Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer**, a former teacher and former Catholic High board member, joined the effort by encouraging the communities at Our Lady of Angels Convent and Assisi House in Aston as well as other convents and friends of the sisters to collect tabs. Over the years hundreds of tabs have been sent to Catholic High for this project. They are placed in a recycled pretzel container that holds 10 pounds of tabs. Many people are involved in the project. Tom Francis, dietary manager at Our Lady of Angels; Michael Sabolcik, assistant manager; and Jerome Burton, chef, also help to see that the tabs from any activities at OLA are saved for the project.



(L-R) Mike Sabolcik, Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer, Jerome Burton, and Tom Francis oversee the "tab project" at our Lady of Angels Convent.



(L-R): Sisters Margaret O'Brien, Mary Farrell, Mary Vandergeest, Stephanie Unger, Katie O'Donnell, Gerald Meskill, Agnes Bonner, Kathy Dougherty, and Frances Cassidy participated in Wilmington's 2015 St. Patrick's Parade.

DELAWARE

The Saturday before St. Patrick's Day is traditionally the day for Wilmington's St. Patrick's Parade. This year parade marchers—including our sisters—woke to find that it was raining...really raining! However, stalwart women that they are, 15 of them showed up to march with the Catechism Kids group. Despite the soggy weather, Phil Leach, chair of the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation Board and founder of Catechism Kids, led the group down King Street attired in a kilt and a green Catechism Kids shirt. Following the parade the group continued their celebration at the Jackson Inn where Eileen and Emily Leach coordinated a raffle for tickets to Phillies and Blue Hens baseball games.

the earlier—but still unformulated—dream of organizing a volunteer program. Under the direction of **Sister Sara Marks**, that program—Franciscan Volunteers: *No Risk, No Gain*—is quickly becoming a reality. Initially volunteers will be serving in the Philadelphia area in ministries where our sisters have had a current or previous history: Red Hill Farm and our Corporate Social Responsibility Office in Aston, Anna's Place in Chester, and the Aquinas Center in Philadelphia. We will provide a house where our volunteers will live in community and have frequent gatherings and prayer opportunities with our sisters as they learn about the Franciscan charism and tradition that is so precious to us and so needed in our world! For more information and to listen to podcasts about the new ministry visit: www.osfphila.org/franciscanvolunteers.



TCHS president Dr. Barbara Nazelrod (second from left) and Sister Joyce Helfrich, director of mission, (far right) represent both alumnae and current administration as they welcome other alumnae representatives.



MARYLAND

The Catholic High School of Baltimore completed its 18-month 75th Anniversary with a gala celebration for current and former students, faculty, board members, parents, and staff. The celebration began with a procession of representatives from each graduating class from 1943-2014. Throughout the program, guests were entertained with a variety of musical performances. Two different renditions of the "Prayer of St. Francis" were enjoyed: the traditional version performed by the combined concert choir and alumnae choir and

a new rendition performed by the choir, symphonic band and orchestra, and the alumnae guest musicians. The dance team did a beautiful routine to "Hallelujah" and, returning to an era recalled by a number of our guests, the symphonic band performed "In the Mood." In an announcement that delighted all of the guests, Dr. Barbara Nazelrod declared that the school's main floor would henceforth be named Alumnae Hall. Prior to moving to the Sister Arnoldine Dining Hall, the assembly closed with the school song, "Viva Catholic High."



Sr. Kathy Dougherty is celebrated by Tony Mirenda and Dr. Rosalie Mirenda after receiving one of the 2015 Presidential Humanitarian Awards.



PENNSYLVANIA

Annual events at **Neumann University** assumed special significance this year as they celebrated 50 years of education in the Franciscan tradition. On Charter Day Our Lady of Angels Chapel was filled to capacity with Neumann staff, faculty, students, and sisters as Father Philip Lowe celebrated liturgy. Following the liturgy, guests were invited to a special luncheon and reception at the motherhouse. The annual Scholarship Gala also focused on the anniversary. A light display and an overhead panel of rotating images of Neumann's history transformed the Mirenda Center into a "blend of nostalgia and energy." Presentation of the 2015 Presidential Humanitarian Awards took place following dinner. The evening closed with entertainment featuring the well-known trio, The Priests.



Sister Sara Marks chats with Neumann University students about the purpose of the volunteer program.



PENNSYLVANIA

Something new is happening with the Sisters of St. Francis! During our 2014 Congregational Chapter, we were called to share and rebirth our Franciscan charism in new and deeper ways and to "expand our options for membership and other forms of association." This call led us to revitalize

► Sister Thomasann leads students to the church for Mass. Located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, OLMC serves approximately 270 students in grades Pre-K through eight. The school combines a strong academic program with a deep commitment to helping children grow in their love of God, deepen their understanding of Church teachings, and develop the practice of virtue.

“THOUGH SHE IS NO LONGER IN THE CLASSROOM, SISTER THOMASANN IS STILL FINDING WAYS TO HELP THE STUDENTS AT OLMC BE THE BEST THEY CAN BE.”



Always an Educator: A Life Changing Legacy of Love

As she walks the halls of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Sr. Thomasann Quinn's progress is slowed—not surprisingly—by interruptions of student hugs. She gives each child a few moments of special attention—listening to a story or admiring a new pair of shoes. For the 270 students in grades Pre-K-8, Sister Thomasann is a constant presence who has been part of the fabric of OLMC for the past 30 years. A science, math, and religion teacher for 26 of those years, her “retirement” four years ago may have changed

her job description but it hasn't changed her commitment to the school. She is there every day—interacting with the children, planning religious services and activities, and infusing the school with a strong sense of Franciscan charism.

Students who don't catch Sister Thomasann in the hall sometimes wend their way to her office to say hello and get a gummy bear. “I'm known as the gummy bear nun,” she said. The title dates back to her early years of teaching at OLMC. “I was getting ready to do a drill to review for

a science test. I looked around the room and realized that the students were tired and dragging. So I went back, got a jar of gummy bears that I had in my desk, sat it on a stool, opened the lid, and told them I'd give them a gummy bear for every correct answer. In five minutes I had every child in the class waving a hand in the air.”

Opening the Mind

Sister Thomasann remembers those days of teaching with fond memories. She began her career as a second grade teacher at St.



Sister Thomasann is always eager to lend a hand—whether it be with getting ready for a procession, preparing for First Holy Communion, or simply encouraging the student singers during Mass.



Sister Thomasann feels the love from the students and they feel it back from her. Her constant presence, enthusiastic encouragement, and genuine interest in the lives of the children at OLMC create a special bond between her and the students.

Charles School in Spokane, Washington. Over the years she taught almost every grade, moving to schools in Pendleton, Oregon; Morton, Pottstown, and eventually Bally, Pennsylvania, where she served as principal. But even during her days as an administrator, her heart remained in the classroom. After twelve years as a principal, she headed to OLMC and returned to teaching. “I couldn’t shake my yearning to be with the children,” she said.

Teaching math and science—subjects that lent themselves to the hands-on teaching style she favored—were particularly enjoyable for Sister Thomasann. She found that something as simple as putting a drop of water on a microscope slide and letting stu-

dents see the amoeba opened their eyes to the wonders of the world. “You can’t teach science without seeing God’s hand in all of creation,” she said. “It is like peeling back nature and seeing God in action.”

That kind of deep spirituality permeated Sister Thomasann’s approach to her students as well. Her ability to see God in action in everything and everyone was a gift in the classroom. “I looked at each student who came across my path as a special child of God,” she said. “Their maturity and understanding of concepts were where God had them at that time in their lives. It was my responsibility to guide them and direct them to the next level in their journey. When children struggled or made mistakes,

I reminded them that God doesn’t make junk—that God dwells in them and that through striving they could do better.”

Former student Kate Reilly, whom Sister Thomasann taught in the mid-90s, remembers her passion for teaching and her commitment to her students. “I was not particularly scientifically or mathematically inclined but she was always able to keep my interest,” said Kate. “When I struggled, she was always willing to stay after school to help me or anyone else who needed it.”

Helping students gain self-confidence was a crucial and very personal objective. “When I went to school, I found reading

continued on page 14



▲ The sixth graders at OLMC participate in the DARE substance abuse prevention program.

very difficult,” Sister Thomasann explained. “That led me as a teacher to try different things. If a student wasn’t getting it one way, I would just try something else.” That strategy was one she imparted to her students as she worked with them on science fair projects. She challenged them to think critically, test their assumptions, and evaluate their results. Many of her students won awards at the county science fair and one even went to California to participate in the national science fair. “The children didn’t mind being pushed,” she said. “And when they came back from presenting their projects, they were so proud.”

In addition to being a teacher and an inspiration to her students, Sister Thomasann also served as a role model and mentor for many faculty members at OLMC. “She taught me so much,” said Paula Kin, a current sixth grade teacher who was her former grade partner. “I never saw her give up on a child—ever. She always found a way to help them.”

Reaching the Soul

Though she is no longer in the classroom, Sister Thomasann is still finding ways to help the students at OLMC be the best they can be. These days, one of her primary responsibilities is planning liturgies and prayer services. She works hard to involve every child from kindergarten through eighth grade throughout the course of the year. The younger children ring chimes and carry inspirational posters in the entrance procession while older ones hold the American and Papal flags. Sixth through eighth graders have the opportunity to be servers and seventh and eighth graders may serve as lectors. Besides preparing the lectors for their liturgical ministry, she also plans a retreat for the eighth graders, helps students prepare for first penance and first communion, and helps direct the young seminarians who make weekly visits to the school as part of their training.



Because her faith is so important to her, Sister Thomasann makes a wonderful spiritual role model for the students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School.



▲ *Sister Thomasann loves visiting the kindergarten classroom. The children are always happy to see her and enjoy showing her the projects on which they are working.*

► *Sister Thomasann stops for a moment to talk with former student Kate Riley and her mother, Ginny Riley, who is secretary at OLMC.*

“Sister Thomasann is a wonderful spiritual role model,” said OLMC principal Dawn Parker. “Her faith is evident and it imbues her with an amazing positive energy. She can relate the importance of faith to others because it is so important to her personally.” Dawn remembers a Thanksgiving prayer service planned and led by Sister Thomasann that particularly impressed her. Dawn was sitting in the sanctuary while Sister Thomasann reflected with the students about who provides the gifts we receive and about being “alleluia people.” “She was up there repeating, ‘Put your left hand in the air and say Alleluia! Put your right hand in the air and say Praise the Lord!’” Dawn recalled. “I looked around wondering how the children would respond and as I watched, I saw everyone join in. Even the older students and altar boys were doing it!”

With an enthusiastic faith that extends well beyond the chapel, Sister Thomasann explained that, “One of my delights is to visit the classrooms to talk about different feasts and to pray with the children.” On St. Francis Day she sets up a display in the



hallway and talks with the children about why St. Francis means so much to her.

“I remember Sister Thomasann as prayerful and loving—and a person of great faith,” said Kate. “She helped me realize the importance of having an active faith life and that is something that I still carry with me.”

Touching the Heart

That faith-filled, loving nature has been the cornerstone of Sister Thomasann’s ministry in education. From the very beginning, she saw herself as much more than a teacher of facts—endeavoring to bring her whole self to the nurturing of her students’ academic, emotional, and spiritual selves. “From my first days in the classroom as a second grade teacher, I knew that sharing my inner joy with the little ones was a first step in getting them to realize that they, too, were good and that they were loved by Jesus,” she said. “Most of all, I wanted them to have joy.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Nurture the spiritual lives of the children around you. Share your own beliefs with them and make a point of demonstrating how spirituality can be part of their everyday lives.
- Volunteer your time at a local school. Both public and private schools are often looking for help in the office, the cafeteria, or the classroom. Some school districts and Head Start programs even provide special opportunities for folks over 55 to become “foster grandparents” in the classroom.
- Faced with dwindling funding and increased demands, many schools are finding it more and more difficult to provide extra enrichment programs for students. Volunteering to organize a talent show, lead a robotics club, or organize an after-school running group can help augment the programs offered by faculty and staff.
- Support your local school by donating books, crayons, paper, and other necessary supplies.
- Use the attached envelope to make a monetary contribution to education ministries.

Since her “retirement,” Sister Thomasann has added an extra practice to her daily routine—praying for each and every one of the students she has taught at Mount Carmel using a prayer binder that holds all their names. “I feel a responsibility to pray in a special way for all those students that have been part of my life,” she explained. On the flipside, the students whose lives she has touched keep a special place in their hearts for her as well. “She has inspired a lot of youngsters to do their best and they don’t forget her,” said Paula. That number grows daily as Sister Thomasann continues to touch the lives and hearts of each and every student at OLMC. ■

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

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Sisters of St. Francis Foundation 2014 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all.*

— Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson's words remind me of you—for you are the source of hope for the many women, children, and men who have been touched by your goodness and generosity. Without knowing a particular person, you have reached out and lent support. With heartfelt gratitude, we express deep appreciation for your generous support of our ministries and present to you our 2014 Annual Report.

Always we thank God for you,

Sr. Mary Vandergeest

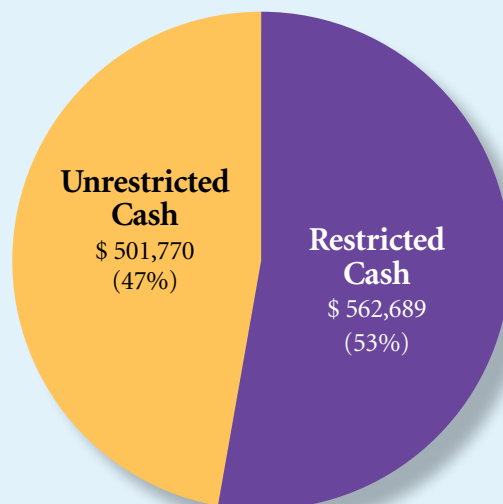
Sr. Mary Vandergeest
Executive Director



Total Donations: \$ 1,064,459

Restricted: \$ 562,689 (53%)

Unrestricted: \$ 501,770 (47%)



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.

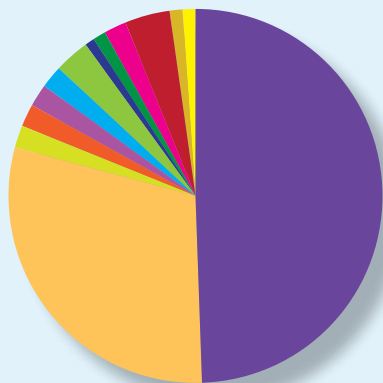
WITH HEARTS FILLED WITH GRATITUDE
THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Thank You!

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

Distribution of Unrestricted Funds:

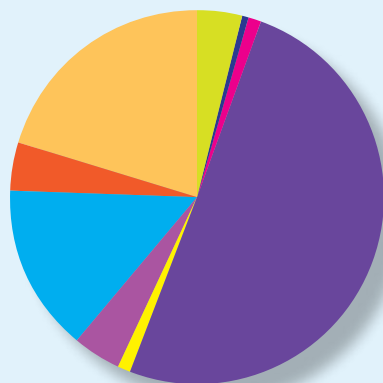
\$ 501,770



- The Catholic High School of Baltimore \$ 250,000 (50%)
- Assisi House Renovations \$ 150,000 (30%)
- Franciscan Spiritual Center - Aston \$ 20,000 (4%)
- Healey International Relief Fund \$ 15,000 (3%)
- Anna's Place \$ 10,000 (2%)
- Annunciation House \$ 10,000 (2%)
- Mother Seton Academy \$ 10,000 (2%)
- St. Joseph Family Counseling Center \$ 10,000 (2%)
- Transitions \$ 10,000 (2%)
- St. Clare of Assisi House \$ 6,000 (1%)
- Asylee Women Enterprise \$ 3,000 (1%)
- St. Francis Inn \$ 3,000 (1%)
- Undistributed \$ 4,770 (1%)

Distribution of Restricted Funds:

\$ 562,689



- Assisi House \$ 280,404 (50%)
- Retirement \$ 114,748 (20%)
- Shelter & Social Ministries \$ 86,470 (15%)
- Foreign Ministries \$ 24,486 (4%)
- Education \$ 21,629 (4%)
- TCHS \$ 23,862 (4%)
- Parish Ministries \$ 4,585 (1%)
- Memorial Garden \$ 4,360 (1%)
- Spiritual Ministries \$ 2,145 (0%)

Explanation of Restricted Categories

Assisi House: Wiring Repairs & Renovations; **Retirement:** Assisi House, St. Ann Convent, General Retirement; **Shelter & Social Ministries:** Anna's Place, Committee for Responsible Investment (CRI), Dawn's Place, human trafficking, Peace and Justice fund, Philadelphia Catholic Services, Social Ministries fund, St. Joseph's Family Center, St. Paul's Family, Center, Phoenixville Shelter, Asylee Women Enterprise, St. Francis Hospital-Wilmington, discretionary fund for the poor; **Foreign Ministries:** Africa, Haiti; **Education:** Drexel Neumann Academy, Benedictine Academy; **TCHS:** The Catholic High School of Baltimore; **Parish Ministries:** OLA Chapel, OSF Caregivers, San Damiano Cross, St. Anthony-Baltimore, Vocations; **Memorial Garden:** trees, benches, bricks, and pergola; **Spiritual Ministries:** Franciscan Spiritual Center-Aston, Franciscan Renewal Center-Reno Project.



In Memoriam

Sister Charlotte Lagnese
(formerly Sister Marguerite Mary)
January 13, 2015

Sister Rosemary Napolitano
(formerly Sister Mary Conrad)
January 30, 2015

Sister Miriam Patrice Hausman
February 6, 2015

Sister Clare Carty
(formerly Sister St. Clare)
February 14, 2015

Sister Margaret Bonner
(formerly Sister Aloysia)
March 12, 2015

Sister Elena Goulding
April 7, 2015

Sister Carol Ann Zurlo
(formerly Sister Emma Francis)
April 25, 2015



BREAKING NEWS!

After 27 years under the sponsorship of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, assumed its own governance on May 19, 2015, becoming a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Proud of this significant accomplishment, the Sisters congratulate and pray for the board and staff as they embark on this transition and continue to fulfill their Franciscan mission to serve families in need of shelter and security.

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

► **Joan and Phyllis:** Joan (right) and her long-time partner Phyllis, were legally married last year “to share in the rights and privileges afforded us by our state and federal government.”



FoCUS

JOAN DE GREGORIO

▼ **Joan's volunteer work is about more than keeping busy. It's about maintaining a connection to the women she's called "sister" over the years.**



"I HAVE LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO CONTEMPLATE THE MANY CHANGES IN MY LIFE AND TO SEE THE HAND OF GOD LEADING ME BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN WHEN I SAID 'YES' TO GOD."

► **Joan loves the fact that from the foundation office she can see the tree planted in memory of her twin sister Bernice. Bernice had connections with the sisters as well and frequently visited the sisters in Assisi House.**



It's Wednesday morning in the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation office and Joan DeGregorio has just arrived from New Jersey for her weekly day of service. Her work involves various activities—maintaining Excel sheets with postage expenditures, posting information on donations, and filing—as Joan says, “There’s always something to be done!”

Joan's volunteer work with the foundation began in 2012. However, her connection with the congregation has been a long one. She met our sisters when she was a student at St. Maria Goretti High School in Philadelphia and was herself a member of the congregation for 20 years. Her family has always had a love for the sisters—her mother sold raffle tickets to raise funds for bazaars held at the motherhouse back in the 1960s. In 1981, Joan left the congregation but she never lost touch with the sisters whom she knew, lived with, and called “sister.” “For me ‘giving back’ was a ‘no-brainer,’” Joan explained. “Working with sisters whom I did not know gives both me and the sisters the opportunity to share our stories and to grow in relationship. Plus my years with the sisters give me a sense of history and a knowledge of the community that allows me to add another perspective to foundation projects.”

Sister Kathleen Parisi, associate director of the foundation, sees Joan as someone whose life is still very much impacted by the Franciscan charism. “She often goes over to Assisi House to visit sisters with whom she formerly ministered,” Sister

Kathy explained, “and she is also a frequent attendee at programs at the Franciscan Spiritual Center. That Franciscan spirit is just part of who she is!” Joan herself sees her work as a way of continuing the Franciscan mission. “Being with the sisters is a privilege and blessing to me,” she says. “It is a grace to realize the truth of T.S. Eliot’s words. ‘And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.’ I would like to think that in my life, wherever I am, I am carrying the spirit of St. Francis and the sisters and thereby, furthering their mission.”

Let's Hear From You!

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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



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Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



SrsofStFrancis

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SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION



Help support our newest program

Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk... No Gain

This initiative gives young women and men a unique year-long opportunity to work alongside our sisters in places where our congregation has a historical presence. Volunteers share their talents and educational background at ministry sites like Anna's Place (Chester, Pennsylvania), Red Hill Farm (Aston, Pennsylvania), and the office for Corporate Social Responsibility (Aston, Pennsylvania).

Participants will experience communal living, receive a stipend to offset personal expenses, and take part in workshops and retreats to deepen their spirituality and understanding of the Franciscan tradition.

For more information about this program, contact Sister Sara Marks, OSF, at (610) 558-7709 or smarks@osfphila.org, or fill out the below form.

I would like to be contacted about becoming a volunteer.

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ E-MAIL _____

How you can lend a hand:

- Become a volunteer
- Make a donation
- Sponsor a volunteer
- Spread the word to young adults
- Pray for the success of the program

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 or call us at (610) 558-7726

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Wells Fargo Helps Chester Students

In December Wells Fargo's community affairs manager, Aldustus Jordan, and area president for Delaware-Chester, Robin Choi, presented a check for \$50,000 to



The students at Drexel Neumann Academy in Chester, Pennsylvania, will benefit greatly from the generosity of Wells Fargo.

Drexel Neumann Academy. The gift indicates that Wells Fargo is committed to making a positive difference in the school community. Sister Nora Nash introduced Mr. Jordan to the needs of the Chester school and Wells Fargo's positive response was graciously received by president Sister Maggie Gannon, and principal Sister Cathy McGowan. In addition to the financial assistance that these funds will provide for student scholarships, Wells Fargo volunteers will also participate

actively in enabling student learning through field trips, reading, and a "Hands on Banking" program as part of its corporate commitment to strengthening communities and improving educational opportunities for children.

► *The original Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, then named St. Bernard's, was built in 1876. The Sisters of St. Francis were the first teachers and administrators in the two-room schoolhouse. Today, as the school prepares to celebrate its 140th anniversary, Sister Thomasann Quinn continues to bring the Franciscan spirit to the halls of OLMC, enriching the lives of the students and staff in her own unique way. One way Sister Thomasann—seen here in the early 2000s—educates the students on the Franciscan way of life is to dress up in the old habit. Read more about Sister Thomasann and OLMC School on page 12.*



Before visitors began their tour, Sister Ruth Bernadette O'Connor welcomed them and shared information about the bronze statue of St. Francis that graces our entry hall.

Come Inside... Take a Tour

February 8 was an exciting day both for our sisters and for the 250 people who attended the open house at Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston where sisters from the motherhouse and the surrounding area conducted tours. Highlights of the tour included our chapel, the Heritage Room and heritage display on the first floor, Visitation Convent which is typical of the living units in the motherhouse, and our beautiful 5th floor Canticle Room where visitors enjoyed the magnificent view. And, of course, the view of our big red dome as seen through the skylight elicited more than a few exclamations of "Wow!" Time to socialize with the sisters while enjoying refreshments and selecting the many "take home" items offered an especially pleasant close to an enjoyable afternoon. The day was, indeed, a graced experience for all involved—both our guests and our sisters who were so pleased to share their home. If you're interested in taking a tour of our motherhouse, contact Sister Kathleen Parisi at (610) 558-7714.