

Good News

Volume 10.1 Spring 2007

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

VERSIÓN
EN ESPAÑOL
DENTRO

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Commitment Statement

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

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

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

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

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www.osfphila.org

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POINT OF VIEW

Deep in our roots...

From the founding days of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, our mission has been deeply rooted in service to those who are poor and underserved, particularly women and children. Maria Anna Bachmann, our foundress, was a widow with four children who ran a boarding house for immigrant working women when she responded to her call to begin a new religious congregation to serve the needs of the immigrants of her day. When an influenza epidemic broke out in the city, our sisters went into private homes to nurse those who were sick and brought some patients into their home as well because there was no one to take care of them. Today we cherish our heritage and desire to respond to the needs of our times in our choice of ministry and in our use of resources.

In this issue our mission is embodied in the work of Sister Francis Christi DeMarchi in her development of the Job Placement Program at John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls’ High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. One third of the student population participate in this internship

TODAY WE CHERISH OUR HERITAGE AND DESIRE TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS
OF OUR TIMES IN OUR CHOICE OF MINISTRY AND IN OUR USE OF RESOURCES.

program that pairs young women with businesses in downtown Philadelphia, empowering them with greater self-confidence and clearer career goals. You will meet Lyanna Rivera and hear about her experience at GlaxoSmithKline pharmaceutical company and her desire to further her education. You will also read about Sister Joan Dreisbach and the parishioners of St. Leo the Great Parish, Lincroft, New Jersey, and how they made a difference one house, one family, one person at a time on a volunteer trip to help the people of New Orleans.

These stories are about our brothers and sisters in ministry with us, all desiring to en flesh the Gospel message in our way, in our times. How grateful we are for God’s great goodness to all of us!

In this issue we also are sharing with you the logo for our General Chapter as we prepare for it in June 2008. (General Chapter is the governing body of the congregation which meets every six years to set direction for the congregation.) This logo, seen at the bottom of this and every page, symbolizes the visitation of Mary to her cousin, Elizabeth. The younger and the older woman, both pregnant, are filled with faith and wonder, trusting in the future possibilities that God has for them. The theme is from our congregation’s Constitutions: We step forward each day into the future of God’s promise.

May rich blessings be with you as you live into the future of God’s promise for you and your loved ones!
Our gratitude and prayers are with you!

Lynn Patrice Lavin, OSF

Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin, OSF
Congregational Minister

On the cover: Seeing all of the things that had once belonged to New Orleans’ families reduced to ruin was sobering for the high-spirited volunteer team from St. Leo’s Church in Lincroft, New Jersey.

Lending a Hand... Extending *the* Reach



Sister Edythe talks with Sharon Jacques, who signs release papers for volunteer work to begin on her mother's house. Her mother, who was not well enough to travel back to New Orleans yet, had lived in the house since it was built in 1952. Sharon's own home in New Orleans was destroyed.



After the group prayed together at the end of a long day, Sister Edythe took a short walk in the neighborhood to reflect on the day in solitude. When she returned, she said of her experience with her new friends: "I looked around at all these young people during our prayer and I saw the face of God. God's presence is there in these people."

After Karl Uhrig came home from New Orleans, friends wanted to know what he'd seen there. "People asked me, 'Do you think you made a difference?' And I'd tell them, 'Yes, we did. Every house we worked on is that much closer to being a home again,'" said Karl, a parishioner at the Church of St. Leo the Great in Lincroft, New Jersey. Karl decided to volunteer after hearing an announcement at a Sunday church service. "I just had a calling," he said. "I didn't know what I could do but I knew I could do something." Along with fourteen other parishioners, Karl traveled to New Orleans in April 2006—eight months after the levees failed and flooded the city—to volunteer with Operation Helping Hands, a recovery effort sponsored by Catholic Charities.

Transportation costs for the volunteers to travel to New Orleans were paid by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, who decided to make the funds available in response to Katrina. Eventually two groups from St. Leo's as well as a group of volunteers from St. Stanislaus, in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, were able to travel to New Orleans with the support of the sisters.

Sister Joan Dreisbach, a member of the congregation and pastoral associate at St. Leo's, read about the offer for transportation funding and found herself entertaining the idea of organizing a group of volunteers at her church. "I said to myself, 'I could do that,'" she recalled. Soon a group of fourteen men and women, including Karl Uhrig, had put their busy lives on hold and made the commitment to go. Though she hadn't initially planned to, Sister Joan decided to join them.

Volunteers Bring Practical and Spiritual Support

A year and a half after Katrina, the rebuilding of New Orleans has slowed to a crawl. Planning paralysis has created uncertainty for families who want to return and rebuild. Long-promised financial aid for homeowners hasn't been forthcoming. Clean-up efforts in huge swaths of the city have not even begun. Drug sales in back-of-town neighborhoods are booming; homicide rates have climbed well above pre-storm levels. The Postal Service estimates that only 171,000 of New Orleans's 460,000 residents have returned.

Yet despite the lingering aftermath, the people of New Orleans persist in efforts to put their lives and their city back together

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✧ ONE VOLUNTEER SAID, "I JUST HAD A CALLING...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I COULD DO BUT I KNEW I COULD DO SOMETHING."



When the volunteers arrived, the houses still contained everything that the fleeing families had left behind. The first order of business: take everything that couldn't be salvaged to the curb. Let in a little air and light. After the water receded, mold bloomed on every surface. Mold on the far wall reaches the ceiling.



The work of gutting the houses was often slow and tedious, especially because the volunteers worked without power tools. Heavy boots, masks, and gloves protected against toxins and cuts. Almost everyone went home with a few bruises.

VOLUNTEERS SPENT FOUR DAYS WORKING TO CLEAN OUT AND GUT TWO HOUSES IN ONE OF THE CITY’S DROWNED NEIGHBORHOODS

continued from page 3

again. One source of practical and spiritual support has come from the legions of volunteers—like those from St. Leo’s—who have come to New Orleans to lend a hand, provide witness, and listen to the still raw stories of the survivors.

The St. Leo’s volunteers spent four days working to clean out and gut two houses in one of the city’s drowned neighborhoods. The work was dirty, dangerous, and sometimes grueling. Homeowners Benny and Lourdes Pampo came each day to watch the progress on their house. The Pampos had lived in their home for twenty-seven years after emigrating from the Philippines to the U.S. with their six children, now grown. The Pampos evacuated ahead of Katrina, staying first with a son in Baton Rouge and later renting an apartment there.

“We were so happy to meet those people from New Jersey,” said Lourdes Pampo. “We loved them. We had fun and were enjoying ourselves, though it smelled terrible.” No one had been in the house since the storm. The volunteers donned respirators, formed a bucket brigade, and began digging out. Lourdes said “the older Sister”—Sister Joan, 77—“kept going no matter what.”

The St. Leo’s volunteers hauled out everything that was still in the house, “neckties, books, pillows, everything they didn’t take with them,” Sister Joan said, and took it to the curb for garbage pickup. She recalled the Pampos coming into their beleaguered home, picking up their belongings, and “just looking at them.” After the house was emptied out, the volunteers took “crowbars and hammers—we had no power tools,” Karl Uhrig said, “and tore out the old plaster and lathe right down to the studs.”

Members of St. Leo’s congregation have remained in touch with the Pampos, helping them negotiate with public bureaucracies and fill out complicated aid applications. “They want to adopt us!” said Lourdes about the parishioners of



Exhausted by the work and an emotion-filled day, Sister Edythe caught a quick nap in the back of the van parked near a house that the volunteers had been working on. The duct tape wound around her sleeves and pants legs kept ever-present hordes of roaches from crawling up her arms and legs.

St. Leo’s. “We’re so lucky God sent them to us.” Lourdes said her husband Benny had long tended a garden in back of their modest home. “He grew beans, vegetables, herbs. We miss our backyard,” she said wistfully. “It’s hard, it’s hard, but we’re surviving.”

Feeling the Presence of God

When a second group from St. Leo’s volunteered to go to New Orleans the following October, Karl Uhrig jumped at the chance to return. Before the group left, Father Leonard Lang, the parish priest, told Karl and the others “You will see the face of God there.” Sister Edythe Norman, also a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, who was among the volunteers, said she felt “the presence of God with his arms outstretched embracing our group.”

As they drove through the neighborhoods, Karl, a ship’s guide in New York harbor, was surprised to see that little had changed in the six months since he’d been there. There might be a FEMA trailer parked in a yard or someone peeking out from a front door, but no other sign of life for blocks. Weeds had grown up waist-high in the yards. Some houses had escaped unharmed while just around the corner, houses had been knocked off foundations, roofs were caved in, and porches were gone.

For four days, the five men and nine women—the youngest 23, the oldest 69—worked together, ate together, shared a dormitory and bathrooms, laughed, cried, and prayed together. “We went down as

strangers and we came back as family,” said William Wei, a police sergeant with the county prosecutor’s office and a member of the group.

After Katrina, William had heard people say that New Orleans’ neighborhoods should “just be bulldozed,” he recalled. But he came to feel otherwise, especially after meeting the people who live there.

“I want people to understand that New Orleans has not recovered yet—people are still living in a traumatic situation and not getting the help they need. We saw the poorest of the poor, people with no family to turn to. They have every right to be there,” he said. William spent an hour listening to a police officer in a café tell the story of what he’d gone through after the flood. “Everywhere you went, people still wanted to tell their stories,” William said.

Tackling an Overwhelming Job Step by Step

In the volunteer’s first assignment, Jennifer Nimon, a schoolteacher, worked with two other women, tearing out tile and plaster walls in the bathroom. “It was amazing how we all worked so perfectly together with no experience. We took turns and got the job done,” she said. People didn’t say much or even need to ask for help from one another. They just seemed to sense what was needed and they did it.

At the second house, floodwaters had reached the five-foot mark and had stayed

▼ *The New Jersey volunteers ended a day of work with a prayer (below, right). And a hug. The fourteen men and women from St. Leo’s in Lincroft, New Jersey, started out their journey to New Orleans as strangers and ended up “as family,” according to William Wei, one of the volunteers.*



“LORD, MAY YOU OPEN PEOPLE’S HEARTS THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTRY TO SEND AID TO THESE PEOPLE, THAT DONATIONS MAY COME TO REBUILD THIS AND OTHER HOMES, THAT PEOPLE MAY DONATE THEIR TIME TO REBUILD THIS HOME AND CITY.

MAY THIS HOUSE ONCE AGAIN BE FULL OF LIFE AND LOVE FOR YOUR KINGDOM. MAY NEW LIFE BE CONCEIVED HERE, BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES CELEBRATED WITH JOY HERE.

MAY THIS BE A PLACE FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO GATHER TO SHARE YOUR LOVE AND PRAISE YOUR NAME.

WE PRAY IN JESUS’ NAME, AMEN.”



The volunteer team from St. Leo's takes to the curb all household belongings and furniture. Another team will tear out the drywall, flooring, and tile—everything that has been ruined by the floodwaters and mold. Trash from gutted houses piled up on the curb but trucks came by regularly to take it away.

there for weeks. The house was boarded up and dark. No one had been inside for fourteen months. When the team began cleaning out the house, furniture simply disintegrated in their hands; a piano fell apart when they tried to lift it; dust filled the air. William Wei remembers thinking that it would take all the time they had left in New Orleans just to clean out the debris.

“It was like loaves and fishes,” he said. “How do you even start meeting the need?” But they hunkered down—carrying out a refrigerator, a sodden mattress, and buckets of ruined belongings. “I have never seen so many cockroaches in my life,” said Jennifer Nimon. The volunteers duct-taped their pant legs and shirtsleeves and kept going. Someone found a wedding dress and a few photos and set them aside for the owners. A day and a half later, they had the house cleaned out and stripped down to bare studs.

Seeing God in All They Met

The volunteers attended Mass together in a church that shared the namesake of their church back home, St. Leo's. They drove right from the job site to the church and sat down in their grungy work clothes in the back pews to worship. When the pastor introduced the volunteers from New Jersey at the end of the Liturgy, the primarily African-American congregation stood up

and applauded. Sister Edythe said she once again “felt overwhelmed with a sense of God's presence.”

Jennifer Nimon said she, too, was very moved by the service and the response and felt she had seen “God in every person I met who told me their story or who welcomed us to their home or their city or who thanked us. God shone through them onto us and we did God's work.” She also felt a sudden and unexpected closeness with the other members of her group.

“The act of sitting there with these great people from my group, who were now my new friends—that did it for me,” she said. “I prayed for them and our efforts. I thanked God for allowing me to be his servant in this experience. It was my favorite part of the trip—dirty, exhausted, and in perfect harmony with God at St. Leo's in New Orleans.”

The Mission Statement of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia states that “With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family, and with all creation.” The supporting of the volunteer effort in New Orleans is a concrete way of showing that this commitment goes way beyond mere words. “We did make a difference,” Karl Uhrig said. One house, one family, one person at a time. ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Make a donation (use the envelope included in this issue) to support members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia interested in joining the “Operation Helping Hands” effort in New Orleans. Or, designate your donation for the volunteer program in New Orleans to assist the community in reoccupying their homes.
- Organize a group of ten to fifteen people from your church or community to go to New Orleans to work with “Operation Helping Hands.” The staff of Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of New Orleans works in close cooperation with volunteer teams, provides simple meals and accommodations, and supervises the work.
- Keep the people of the region in your prayers that their lives and communities may be renewed. The city of New Orleans, indeed much of the Gulf Coast, is still struggling to recover from Katrina.

Share with us the good news of what you did!

Call or email us with the action(s) you took: (610) 558-7726, goodnews@osfphila.org.



The New Orleans congregation of St. Leo the Great warmly welcomed the visitors from New Jersey. Gloria Battiste (right) and her husband Wesley, both retired schoolteachers, evacuated to New Jersey ahead of the storm and felt a special kinship with the volunteers, whom they invited to their home.



Wesley Battiste (center, gesturing) told the volunteers what had happened during Katrina to the house he shares with his wife, Gloria (on the porch). The Battistes returned to find their house intact. The floodwaters had come up to the top of the front steps—and stopped. “This block was lucky,” Gloria said.



PEOPLE & PLACES

Who *are* the ‘Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia’?

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

▼ Sister Nora Nash (right), director of the congregation's office for Corporate Social Responsibility, visits one of the programs that Portland YouthBuilders provides for young people committed to changing their lives for the better.



OREGON

Watching a seed that you've planted grow to fruition is always a blessing. Sister Nora Nash received such a blessing when she visited Portland YouthBuilders (PYB) in Portland, one of the organizations that the Sisters of St. Francis assists with a low-interest loan. PYB supports young adults committed to changing their lives to become self-sufficient, contributing members of the workforce and community. Sister Nora was impressed with PYB's mentorship program which matches students with area professions. She also visited a construction site where PYB students helped with the actual construction of a single-family home. "Our unique partnership with PYB continues to be a model for many of our loans to other organizations," Sister Nora said. Learn more about PYB at www.pybpdx.org.

or a bright smile, Sister Apollonia's weekly visits bring a spirit of Franciscan peace and joy to all at the center. "We are so blessed to have her as part of our team," said Activities Director M.J. Paulison. "If she ever wonders if she is still serving, she need only ask the special people that she touches every day."

felt at the blessing and dedication of the new facility in Bern Township. Approximately forty sisters were among those present for the ceremony at which Sister Francis Ann Harper, CEO from 1977-1990, delivered the dedication. The ceremony also included a blessing by Edward P. Cullen, Bishop of Allentown, and remarks by John Hannon, Board Chair of St. Joseph Regional Health Network, and John Morahan, St. Joseph President and CEO. Mr. Hannon spoke of the new facility as more than the completion of a project. "We commemorate the continuation of a healing mission," he said, "one driven by reverence, integrity, compassion, and excellence."

AWARDS SPOTLIGHT



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

Sister Anne Amati **Delaware**

Peacemaker Award —
Franciscan Federation

Sister Margaret Cunniffe **Delaware**

Woman of the Year Award —
Columbus Day Committee

Sister Mary Farrell **Pennsylvania**

Distinguished Principal Award —
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Sister Francis Marie Yocum **(deceased)** **Maryland**

Auditorium Dedication —
The Catholic High School of Baltimore

Sisters of St. Francis of **Philadelphia**

Recognition of Service Award —
St. Joseph Medical Center,
Towson, MD

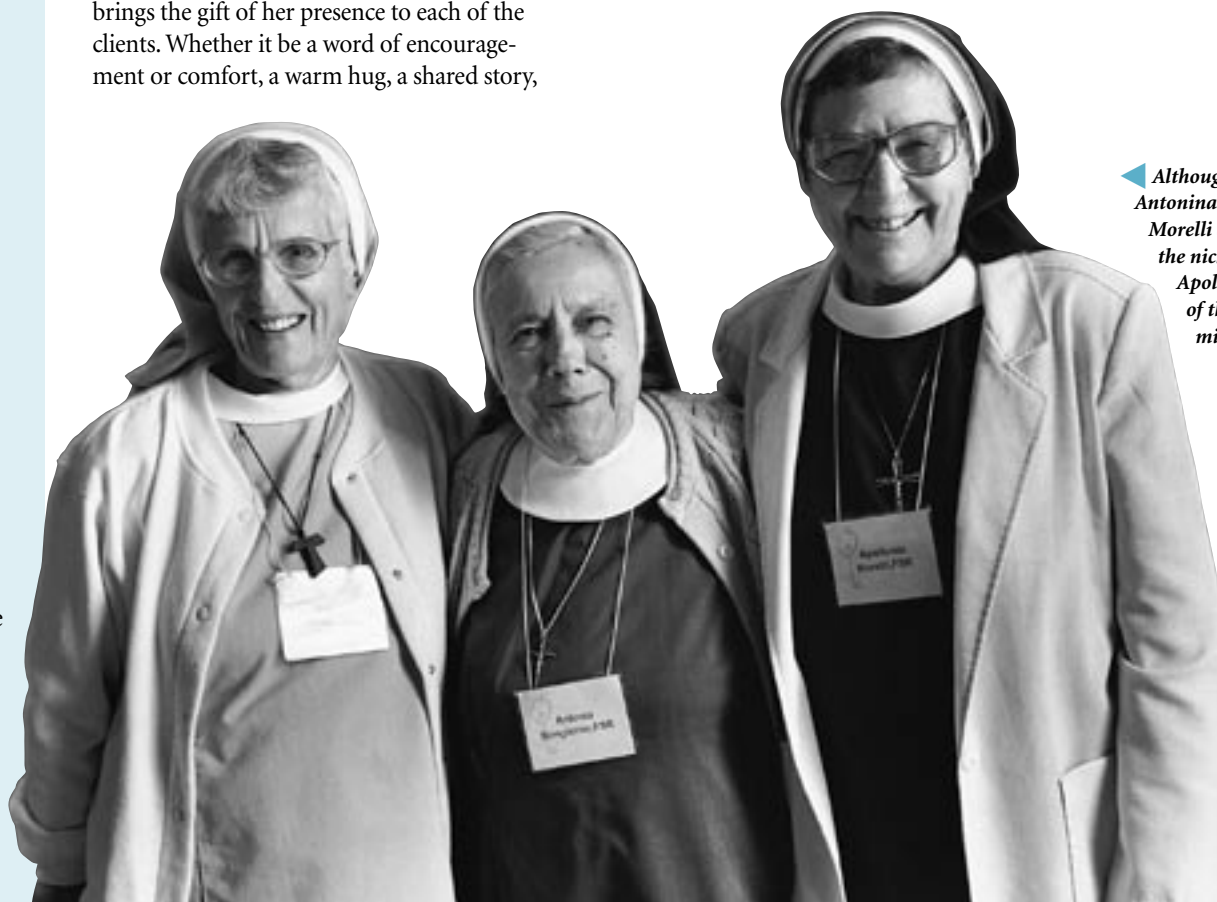
NEW JERSEY

Ninety-one-year-old Sister Apollonia Morelli spends one day a week at the Christian Health Care Adult Day Services—as a volunteer. Known affectionately as "Happy Appy," Sister Apollonia is welcomed by both clients and staff at the Wyckoff facility. She helps to set up for lunch and then clears tables afterward. More importantly, however, she brings the gift of her presence to each of the clients. Whether it be a word of encouragement or comfort, a warm hug, a shared story,

PENNSYLVANIA

The Sisters of St. Francis may no longer sponsor St. Joseph Medical Center in Reading but their presence was definitely

◀ Although Sisters Alberta Manzo, Antonina Bongiorno, and Apollonia Morelli all look happy, only one has the nickname "Happy Appy." Sister Apollonia (right) brightens the days of those she touches in her volunteer ministry in New Jersey.



CELEBRATING JUBILEE

AS SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
OF PHILADELPHIA

Congratulations to Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia celebrating milestones in religious life! This year, these sisters will celebrate Silver, Golden, and Diamond Jubilees. Join with us in congratulating them on many years of service to the people of God as Sisters of St. Francis.



This Portland, Oregon, Companions in Faith group has grown—although new participants have joined, they also have grown as a community of women and men in their understanding of Franciscan Spirituality and in their understanding of their faith.

OREGON

For our Portland Companions in Faith, this year is both a busy and enriching one. The program *Build with Living Stones* and the book *Praying with Clare of Assisi*—important components of the monthly gatherings—provide a deeper understanding of the Franciscan heritage which these women and men have chosen to embrace. During the “Sisters Corner” segment of each meeting, the sisters who are part of the group share on topics related to being a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, including living in community, the challenges of being a Franciscan sister in the twenty-first century, and communal and personal prayer. Carrying their faith into action, the Companions are also working with several local agencies serving those who are poor and marginalized. For more information on Companions, contact companions@osfphila.org, (610) 558-7756.



AFRICA

When Joan Bedell read about Sister Julie Mulvihill’s ministry at Nyumbani Village in Africa (*Good News*, Summer 2006), she thought she might have found the missionary work she was looking for. A recent retiree from the Philadelphia court system, Joan was familiar with the Sisters of St. Francis through programs at the Franciscan Spiritual Center and through her spiritual director, Sister Virginia Spiegel. But it wasn’t until after Joan contacted Sister Julie that she knew the ministry in Nyumbani was for her. In February 2007, Joan left for Africa to give three months of service with the children of Nyumbani.

PENNSYLVANIA

Summer 2006 provided a unique experience for Neumann College student Jaffir Rice—the opportunity to intern with the congregation’s Office of Corporate Social Responsibility. Jaffir gained hands-on experience in what it means to monitor investment portfolios, engage in shareholder advocacy, and administer both community development loans and social justice grants. However, benefits were not one-sided. Sister Nora Nash, Director of the Office of Corporate Responsibility, described the contributions Jaffir made during his internship. “His expertise with various computer programs will enable us to access data more efficiently and his research on various companies gives us a head start on the new season of shareholder advocacy,” she explained. “We were blessed to have a student with a desire to deepen his religious faith as well as his understanding of Franciscan religious life.” For information on the congregation’s corporate social responsibility efforts or internship opportunities, contact us at CorpSocResp@osfphila.org.



OREGON

In addition to its excellent array of programs (retreats, spiritual direction, spirituality workshops, Hispanic ministry offerings, and programs in marriage preparation and enrichment), the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie (*Good News*, Winter 2006) can also boast of its new director. Mary Erickson comes to this position with a balanced set of skills, including strategic planning, fund raising, leadership consulting, and corporate management—skills that

combine well with her certificate in spiritual direction and master’s program work in Applied Theology. A lifelong Milwaukie resident, Mary graduated from Clackamas High School and later earned a B.A. from Marylhurst College. She has twenty-seven years of experience in management and leadership, is a certified spiritual director, and is finishing her Master’s at Marylhurst. Mary participates in United Way, has volunteered at St. Francis Dining Hall, and served on the boards of directors for two organizations. But it’s the Franciscan Spiritual Center – Milwaukie that now reaps the benefits of all of her talents and experience.



► *While an intern in the congregation’s Office of Corporate Social Responsibility, Jaffir Rice received as much as he gave. Although he says he was “given many opportunities to use my talents and skills in support of the mission,” Jaffir also came to know the “strong, determined women” who are the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and took with him moments and memories he won’t soon forget.*

75 years

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER CECIL GABRIEL DePRISCO
SISTER GERTRUDE MARIE LAWRENCE
SISTER FRANCIS ASSISI McDADE
SISTER ANN TERESA MUNDY
SISTER ROSE ELIZABETH PEADENHAUER
SISTER CECILIA AGNES SCHANTA

70 years

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANN ELIZABETH BOWLER
SISTER MARTHA DeMARZO
SISTER ELLEN GLYNN
SISTER ANN MERCEDES MILLER
SISTER HELEN ALOYSE REAGAN

50 years

GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER MARY TERESA BOLAND
SISTER SHEILA MARY BYRNE
SISTER CLARE CARTY
SISTER MARY THERESA CLOONAN
SISTER EUGENE MARY DELANY
SISTER ALBERTUS DOUGHERTY
SISTER KAY MARIE DUNCAN
SISTER ELIZABETH FITZPATRICK
SISTER PHYLLIS ANN GRECO
SISTER HILDEGARDE GROGAN
SISTER EMILY ANN HERBES
SISTER PATRICIA KANE
SISTER ANNA MARIA KEENAGHAN
SISTER MARY PETER KERNER
SISTER FRANCINE McDERMOTT
SISTER MARIA ANGELITA ORTIZ
SISTER GEORGE MARY RHODES
SISTER DORITA SLAUGHTER
SISTER VERONICA MARIE TEVIS
SISTER MARGARET VANWAGENEN

25 years

SILVER JUBILARIANS

SISTER FLORENCE LORRAINE PETSCH

Recognize a name? Like to reconnect or send a congratulatory note? Send communications to Good News, 609 S. Convent Rd., Aston, PA 19014, goodnews@osfphila.org

Students in Demand:

Lyanna Rivera relishes her job at the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline. She maintains expense reports and books meetings and conference calls. "I was very shy over the phone at first," Lyanna said. "Now I just pick up the phone and explain myself in a mannerly way."



On weekday mornings Lyanna Rivera prepares breakfast for herself and her sister before catching the 7:05 train into central Philly, arriving at the John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School before the first bell. Lyanna's father works for US Airways and relies on Lyanna, his oldest daughter, to help out at home. Between school and her family responsibilities, fifteen-year-old Lyanna keeps busy but she didn't hesitate when she was offered an after-school job, an opportunity made possible by a unique partnership between local businesses and Hallahan High School.

"I love school; I'm happy every morning when I get there," said Lyanna, a sophomore in the all-female student body. "The teachers help me get a better education. They are always there for me."

Lyanna is a bright, diligent student. She is bilingual and English is her favorite subject. But it is Lyanna's new afternoon job that has really captured her imagination and is helping her realize her ambitions for the future.

Students Learn Outside the Classroom

Lyanna is a student in Hallahan's business and technology department, chaired by Sister Francis Christi DeMarchi, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Sister Francis Christi coordinates Hallahan's Job Placement Program, an internship program that pairs young women with jobs in businesses in downtown Philadelphia, literally within walking distance of the school's front door.

With Sister Francis Christi's encouragement, Lyanna applied for a job with the international pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline. To Lyanna's delight, she landed the job. She now works as an assistant to a supervisor of the company's technology information department. She manages expense reports, books meetings, makes copies, and communicates with her counterparts at Glaxo's international headquarters in London.

Lyanna believes her classes with Sister Francis Christi and other teachers in Hallahan's business and technology department made all the difference in

her success. "I learned how to communicate in an interview and how to present myself—to be mature, shake their hands, and look them in the eye. We practiced over and over in class. I'm very shy but I learned to have confidence and composure. Now I can just pick up the phone and explain myself in a very mannerly way—no problem."

Lyanna works three hours a day, five days a week, after school. She hopes to work full-time in the summer and to go on to college in two years. "I'm learning about stocks and investments in my business classes at school. They've taught us the value of saving and I've opened a savings account. I'm thinking about my future," said the prudent teenager. "College gives you better choices in jobs. I want that."

Companies and Students Reap Benefits

Lyanna is one of 233 students currently enrolled in Hallahan's Job Placement Program, more than one-third of the student body. The jobs program began informally in the late 1960s in response to requests from local companies for young women to fill part-time positions. Teachers

▼ Sister Francis Christi shares a light moment with students in class, from left to right: Jasmine Thomas, Hind Sawan, Helena Sauter, and Kristie Koczodon. More than 12,000 young women have benefited from Hallahan's Job Placement Program over the years.





Kathleen Bannon confers with her supervisor, Tom Lamb. Her business classes at Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School helped prepare her for her full-time job with Law Enforcement Health Benefits in Philadelphia. "Sister Francis Christi helped me get into a summer college program and that took my education a step further in finance and economics," she said.



Sister Francis Christi meets one-on-one with students to assess their strengths and discuss their needs. Here she meets with Lyanna Rivera, a high school junior and student in Hallahan's business and technology program.

A Hallahan Tradition

recommended students for the jobs and soon word spread about the reliability and quality of the students' performance.

"Our uniforms were always the best advertisement for the program," Sister Francis Christi said. "Businesses that appreciated the good job our students were doing told others about it. I'd get calls all the time. Finally someone at the Chamber of Commerce suggested we formalize the program. I heeded their advice."



Sister Francis Christi started teaching at John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School in 1970. She now chairs the school's business and technology department and coordinates its Jobs Placement Program. Sister Francis Christi takes great pleasure in seeing young women gain self-confidence. "It's such a joy," she said.

Sister Francis Christi estimates that more than 12,000 young women have been placed in jobs with local businesses since 1979. "It's a full circle of satisfaction," she noted. Hallahan provides training, recruitment, and oversight of the interns. The young women gain valuable on-the-job experience while employers enjoy the help of reliable, well-trained employees. Sister Francis Christi said that she and the other instructors reap the benefit of seeing "such accomplished young people going on to have productive lives."

Hallahan's business students used to be known for their excellent shorthand. Now they are more apt to excel in Microsoft Word and advanced accounting programs. Sister Francis Christi added "technology" to the department's name in 1989 and students today hone their skills on banks

of computers in the school's labs. "Sister Francis Christi and her department turn out young women who are far more advanced in computer technology than most employees just coming off the street," explained Nan Gallagher, principal and president of Hallahan High School. "Their basic office skills and technical skills are very strong."

The Job Placement Program is designed to prepare Hallahan graduates for careers in a range of fields including fashion, law, healthcare, real estate, marketing, human resources, and retail business. On average, student interns earn ten dollars an hour—well above minimum wage. Some companies provide interns with college scholarships and part-time and summer jobs while they attend college and many of the young women continue with the companies after graduation.

Partnerships With Lasting Results

Kathleen Bannon graduated from Hallahan High School in 1996. When she heard other girls at school extolling the benefits of Hallahan's business and technology program and the Job Placement Program, she decided to sign up for classes. Further encouragement came from her mother, a Hallahan graduate and former student of Sister Francis Christi.

Playing softball and serving on Student Council kept Kathleen busy in the afternoons during her first two years at Hallahan.

But in Kathleen's senior year, Sister Francis Christi tapped her for a job. "She told me, 'There's a company that needs a person just like you and I'd like to send you for an interview,'" Kathleen explained. "It made me feel good that she'd think of me that way."

Kathleen was offered a job with Law Enforcement Health Benefits, a corporation associated with the Philadelphia police union. "I gained a whole new level of learning about business once I began my internship," Kathleen recalled.

Although Kathleen started out filing for her new employer, within a week she was asked to begin working on a computer. A decade later, Kathleen is now the assistant to the top administrator for the company and is responsible for preparing materials for contract negotiations with the city.

"The business classes at Hallahan set a great foundation for the job I do now," Kathleen said. "They gave me the confidence to take the initiative to take on tasks in which I had no experience—like PowerPoint and public presentations—but which I felt I could do.

Empowering Young Women to Share Gifts

Sister Francis Christi recalled that when Lyanna Rivera learned she'd gotten the job at Glaxo "she was beside herself with happiness—she could hardly believe what was happening to her life." Still, Lyanna continues to combine her school activities

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► Kathleen Bannon and Kristie Maszkiewicz are both alumnae of Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School Jobs Placement Program and work for Law Enforcement Health Benefits in Philadelphia.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Make a donation to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia earmarked for the John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School to support the technology lab and other student needs in the Job Placement Program.
- If you own a company in the Philadelphia area, large or small, hire a young woman from Hallahan's Job Placement Program; contact Sister Francis Christi at the school at (215) 563-8930.
- Because all teenagers face hurdles growing up—and girls in particular often struggle with issues of self-confidence and self-worth—spend time with the teenage girls in your life and your community. Help them find concrete ways to build their skills, talents, and self-confidence.
- Keep Sister Francis Christi and her young students in your prayers that they might grow, lead fulfilling and productive lives, and be nourished by the fellowship they share.

Share with us the good news of what you did!

Call or email us with the action(s) you took:
(610) 558-7726, goodnews@osfphila.org.





Young people must have strong computer skills to succeed in today's business world. Sister Francis Christi (center) instructs students in one of three computer labs in the business and technology department at Hallahan High School. "The girls love it; they want to learn it," said Sister Francis Christi.

Students in Demand

continued from page 9

and her job with responsibilities at home. She helps care for her younger sisters—doing homework with them in the evenings—and for her grandmother who is ill. "She just does whatever has to be done," said Sister Francis Christi about Lyanna's devotion to her family.

"I really want to get into an Ivy League college, a good school. I'm thinking about law school or a career in criminal justice or, who knows, maybe I'll stay in the pharmaceutical field," Lyanna said. Her experience in Hallahan's business program gave her the confidence to set high goals for herself and the practical skills to pursue them. "I just want to help people. A person can just have a job but I want more than that. I want a college degree and a career I can fall back on."

The well-being of young working women has been central to the mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia from its beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation's founder, Mother Francis Bachmann, a widow with four children, welcomed young working women into her home and their struggles and concerns remained the focus of Mother Francis' efforts throughout her life.

"Hallahan's internship program is empowering for women," said Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin, Congregational Minister for the Sisters of St. Francis. Sister Lynn Patrice explained that the Hallahan Job Placement Program carries on a long tradition. "We've always had an emphasis on helping women and children. The Hallahan program empowers young women to develop and use their gifts to make a contribution to the world and to society. That impulse is deep in our roots." ■

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

Nan Gallagher (right), principal and president of John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School, meets with Sister Francis Christi. "The program provides such an advantage for our students when they go into the corporate environment," Nan said. "We get calls all the time from people saying, 'We saw one of the girls from your school at such-and-such company; we'd like some to come to work here.'"



Focus

HILARY ROSS

BY SISTER ANN MARIE SLAVIN, OSF

"HILARY IS AT THE HEART OF OUR MISSION BY HELPING US EXPEDITE OUR WORK...SHE'S OUR BLESSING."

Although she loves working with the sisters, Hilary derives great joy from her family. Hilary (center) is seen here with (left to right) son-in-law Eric, daughter Hilary, son Craig, daughter-in-law Shelley, granddaughter Emily, and son Richard.



One light of Hilary's life is her granddaughter Emmy, with whom she shares a close relationship—they spend every Friday night together for "game night" at Hilary's house.

The old saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person," is certainly apropos when it comes to Hilary Ross. In the congregational offices in Aston, Pennsylvania, "Ask Hilary" or "Hilary can show you" is a frequent catch-phrase, whether it refers to a request for supplies, an appeal for help with a recalcitrant copier, a need for a creatively designed display board, or help organizing the Christmas Giving Tree.

Hilary has worked with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia since 1989. Beginning in a part-time position, she became a full-time employee a year later. Today, as Office Administrator, Hilary oversees mailings, copying, and ordering supplies for all of the congregational offices, as well as "other assigned duties." That "other" might include

taking and distributing minutes for various meetings, investigating equipment problems, or serving on the Celebration committee. Hilary's efficiency, coupled with her innate gentleness, is well recognized by anyone with whom she works. "Not only does she order our every office need," said Sister Betty Kane, Director of Evangelical Life Services, "she also anticipates deadlines, reminds us of schedules we've set—and does everything with a smile."

Born in Middlesex, England, Hilary moved as a child to Canada. It was there, at Quebec's Winter Carnival, that she met her future husband, Richard. She later moved to the United States where she and Richard married and raised

their three children, Hilary, Richard, and Craig. One of the highlights of Hilary's life now is her seven-year old granddaughter, Emily.

What does Hilary enjoy most about her work? "The sisters," she is quick to respond. "They have such a welcoming atmosphere and are so grateful for all that you do for them." Hilary admits to being proud of the fact that **hers** is a "welcome office" where "no one is afraid

to come and ask for help." Ask her how she sees herself contributing to the mission of the Sisters of St. Francis, however, and she states simply, "By helping each office do its job." Coworkers like Sister Nora Nash, Director of the Office of Corporate Social Responsibility, agree but see a much deeper contribution. "She is definitely a woman who has the heart of a Franciscan and lives out of that spirit," Sister Nora said. "Hilary is also at the heart of our mission by helping us to expedite our work, doing so with a smile. She's our blessing!" Sister Miriam Eileen Murray, also a former coworker, agrees. "Hilary is a kind, compassionate human being with the soul and simplicity of Francis," Sister Miriam said. "She is all about service, about building relationships, our core value. In Hilary's life and activities, our Franciscan charism is alive, well, and spreading!"

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Join Us for Spiritual Center's 10th Anniversary!

You're invited to an afternoon of celebration that will include singing, dancing, storytelling, poetry, and art. Celebrate your child within at the Franciscan Spiritual Center-Aston's Tenth Anniversary event on May 6, 2007. Experience the beauty, joy, and camaraderie at the Franciscan Spiritual Center-Aston—whether through guided tours of the retreat and gardens or time on your own enjoying the outdoor waterfall. Enjoy a children's band, journey with a gifted storyteller, experience Irish and Chinese dancing, and view exhibits by noted local artists. Sister St. Joseph Brennon, OSF, Franciscan Spiritual Center's resident-artist, will display her pottery and Josephine Tsai, renowned international artist, will share her lovely watercolors. An engaging program of music and poetry, prepared by Sister Andrea Likovich, OSF, will end the day—a concert will be held in Our Lady of Angels Chapel to conclude the anniversary celebration. For more information, contact the Franciscan Spiritual Center-Aston at (610) 558-6152, fsc@osfphila.org, or visit www.fscaston.org.



Franciscan Spiritual Center-Aston

10th Anniversary Event

"Celebrating the Child Within"

Sunday, May 6, 2007

12:00 Noon to 5:00 P.M.



In Memoriam

Sister Mary Elizabeth Waters
(Sister Mary Demetria)
2/5/07

Sister Denise Joseph Drew
1/15/07

Sister Cecilia Alice Kovach
1/6/07

Sister Mildred Francis Conway
12/30/06

Sister Bernadette Francis Bremmer
12/15/06

Sister Bridget T. McNamara
(Sister Eucharista)
12/1/06

Sister Margaret Joyce
(Sister Margaret St. Francis)
11/15/06

Sister Joan Maenner
(Sister Marie Joan)
10/28/06

Sister Theresa Geary
(Sister Miriam Francis)
10/19/06

Sister Francis Clare Verderosa
(Sister Francis Clare of the
Blessed Sacrament)
9/18/06

Africa to Philadelphia—A Trip for A "Sound" Reason

A popular presence in the dining room and hallways at Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston these days is eleven-year-old Mungai, one of the children of Nyumbani Children's Village in Africa (*Good News*, Summer 2006). Because of severe ear infections, Mungai lost all hearing. He arrived with Sister Julie Mulvihill in October to be seen by doctors at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. Based on initial testing, Mungai qualified for a cochlear implant. As he awaited the surgery, he enjoyed celebrating Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas in America. On January 11, Mungai underwent successful surgery and now some hearing has returned. Mungai eagerly awaits his return home to the Nyumbani Village, which will come after all follow-up visits are complete.

We're making our Spanish insert more effective!

From reader feedback and other sources of evaluation, we've concluded that it would be more effective to offer the Spanish translation of *Good News* on a per-order basis, rather than include one in every issue. Therefore, beginning with the Summer 2007 issue, *Good News* will not contain the Spanish insert. Instead, readers may request the number of copies they need, by returning the business reply card at right. Details:

- Readers may request as many copies as they need; there is no charge. Orders must be received by 5/1/07.
- The Spanish insert will be the same as what's currently included in *Good News* issues (i.e., same contents—both feature articles, other selected items.)



Important Note: An adequate number of orders must be received in order for us to produce the Spanish insert in its present format. Readers will be notified in the event that sufficient orders are not received.



Twelve Sisters of St. Francis traveled from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and California to join thousands of others in Columbus, Georgia, calling for the closure of the controversial School of the Americas, renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC). With them were students from Neumann College in Aston, Pennsylvania—they were among the 22,000 who rallied for the protest.

Environmental Commitment Leads to Grant and Award

Because of their commitment to the environment, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia received a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Energy's program, "Energy Harvest" and received one of the twenty-seven Green Power Awards given by PennFuture. The grant will be used to provide solar energy panels for barns on Red Hill Farm, the congregation's Community Supported Agriculture—it is hoped that they will provide most of the farm's electric power. The PennFuture's Award acknowledges the congregation's sustainable practices including the purchase of 24% wind power from PECO (an energy provider in Pennsylvania). PECO, having learned of the congregation's environmental initiatives from visiting our website (www.osfphila.org), approached us with the opportunity to purchase the alternative energy—all part of PECO's efforts to convince its customers to use nonfossil fuels.

For more information about the congregation's environmental initiatives, see www.osfphila.org/sp/resources/environment.html or contact us at environment@osfphila.org.



Here at Red Hill Farm in Aston, Pennsylvania, a grant will be used to provide solar energy panels for the barns.

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

What do *you* think?

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

Mission Statement

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

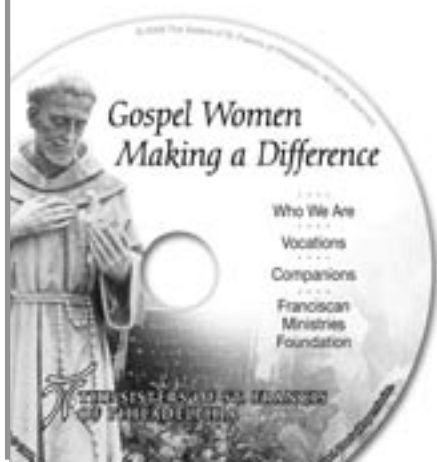
As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and of mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit's action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources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

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

Want to know more about us?

Check out our new DVD!

In addition to general information about the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, you'll also find information about what it means to be a vowed member, about becoming a Companion, and about how your donations are used to further our mission. Like to share it with family and friends or with various parish groups? Contact the Communications Office for a free copy—(610) 558-7726, goodnews@osfphila.org or view the segments at www.osfphila.org!



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New yoga pose, the Dead Bug?

That's what the volunteers in New Orleans called their creation in honor of the many huge live roaches found throughout the houses in which they worked.

It was just one of many self-help methods they employed to endure the hard physical work and the sadness of the experience.

Story on page 3.

▼ Protesters at Ft. Benning, Georgia transformed the ten-foot barbed-wire fences surrounding the protest site into expressions of hope and remembrance, placing crosses and other symbols of hope and resistance into the chain-link barrier—and covering the ground as bodies of those who were slain by graduates of the US Army Training School. *More on page 11.*



▼ *Business School has changed since the days of the manual typewriters seen here at St. Hubert's School in Philadelphia. Today, business students at John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School in Philadelphia are more than computer-savvy. The young women are so skilled that local businesses seek them out for their internship programs!*
Story on page 8.



Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Wind Power, & Solar Energy Panels?

It's all part of the congregation's commitment to the environment! *See page 11.*