

Volume 16.1 Spring 2013

# Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

*Also in this issue:*

- Sister Brings Spirit and Skill to Guardian Angel Childcare
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News



## Sisters Walk with Immigrants:

*Taking a Stand on Immigration*

## 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

## A Spirit of Hospitality

**W**hat a wonderful gift it is to be welcomed—whether we are returning from a long, weary trip, traveling to visit family or friends, or simply returning home at the end of a busy day. A positive greeting, a warm smile, or a hug can alleviate fatigue and concerns and enable a person to feel glad to be home.

*This year the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of*



**Sister Esther Anderson, OSF  
Congregational Minister**

*the death of their foundress, Anna Bachmann. In her brief 39 years, Anna, an immigrant, was a wife and mother of four children. After the untimely death of her husband, she founded our congregation together with her sister and a friend. Their home became renowned for its hospitality as they welcomed young immigrant girls who were looking for a safe and respectable home, orphans, sick persons, and those in need.*

*In this edition of Good News, we experience how sisters continue our congregation's legacy of hospitality. Members like Sisters Marie Lucey and Maureen Duignan implement our 1996 Corporate Stand to work for more just and humane immigration legislation. By taking this stand, we endeavor to diminish the economic and political hardships that immigrants face. The poignant stories of Alicia and Giro touch hearts and make the steps and efforts to assist them in achieving legal status or asylum worthwhile.*

*Sister Kathy Pollard at Guardian Angel Childcare Center in Delaware lives the spirit of hospitality each day by reaching out to welcome children who arrive at school from neighborhoods where violence and drug dealing is an everyday reality. She and the staff provide a safe haven for children and enable them to become their best selves.*

*After 150 years, the spirit of hospitality of Anna Bachmann continues to inspire and challenge us to welcome and assist the new immigrant. Most people in this country have immigrant roots. Hopefully that reality will remind each of us to promote respect and inclusion for people asking to make the United States their home today.*

*Practicing a spirit of hospitality will not only bring comfort to others, but will also be a source of blessing for ourselves.*

*St. Esther Anderson, OSF*





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*Located on the eastside of Wilmington, Delaware, Guardian Angel Childcare is a program of the Ministry of Caring designed to help each child be his or her best self—socially, academically, and spiritually. Sister Kathleen Pollard is the first face children and parents see each morning as they enter the building and she has a warm welcome for each and every one of them.*

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

**Managing Editor**  
Florence Smith

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

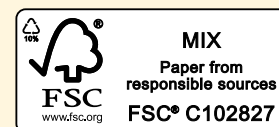
**Editorial Board**  
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Sister Marie Monica Borden, OSF  
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**Graphic Design**  
Geneen Pintof

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

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

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**On the cover:** East Bay Sanctuary Covenant Executive Sister Maureen Duignan enjoys one of the center's younger clients. East Bay supports and assists immigrants as they navigate the often confusing United States immigration system.



# Sisters Walk with Immigrants:

*Taking a Stand on Immigration*



Sister Maureen works with a family at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. Formed in 1982, East Bay provides support, protection, and advocacy to low-income and indigent refugees and immigrants.

“PEOPLE OFTEN ASK WHY IMMIGRANTS DON’T COME IN LEGALLY. THE ANSWER IS THAT IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO GET INTO THE UNITED STATES LEGALLY. THE QUOTAS ARE VERY SMALL AND IT REQUIRES YEARS OF WAITING.”

Alicia\* is a bright young woman—passionate about her studies and full of energy. But unlike many of the friends she grew up with who have gone on to graduate school and have careers, Alicia is still struggling to get her college degree. It’s been eleven years since Alicia started pursuing her undergraduate degree and she still hasn’t been able to walk across that stage. That’s because Alicia is undocumented. She came to the United States with her family when she was five years old. She doesn’t remember any other home nor can she recall a time when she didn’t speak English. But unlike her American-born

peers, Alicia is legally barred from holding a job, attaining a driver’s license, or gaining access to the public benefits that could help her pay for school.

Alicia is not alone. In fact, the American Immigration Council estimates that more than two million young people are in the same position. In 2001, the hopes of undocumented individuals like Alicia were raised when the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was first introduced as

bipartisan legislation. Its main provision—providing permanent resident status upon completion of two years of college or service in the

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\* Last name omitted to protect individual privacy.



*Twenty-nine year old Alicia, shown here with her cousin, Janet, came to the United States with her family when she was five years old. Although Alicia doesn’t remember any home other than the United States, her undocumented status has made it difficult for her to find work, pursue her undergraduate degree, or even obtain a driver’s license.*

▼ *Sister Marie Lucey serves as Director of Advocacy and Congregational Outreach for the Franciscan Action Network. Her work with immigration focuses on advocacy and education helping students like Maria (seen below) fulfill their dreams.*



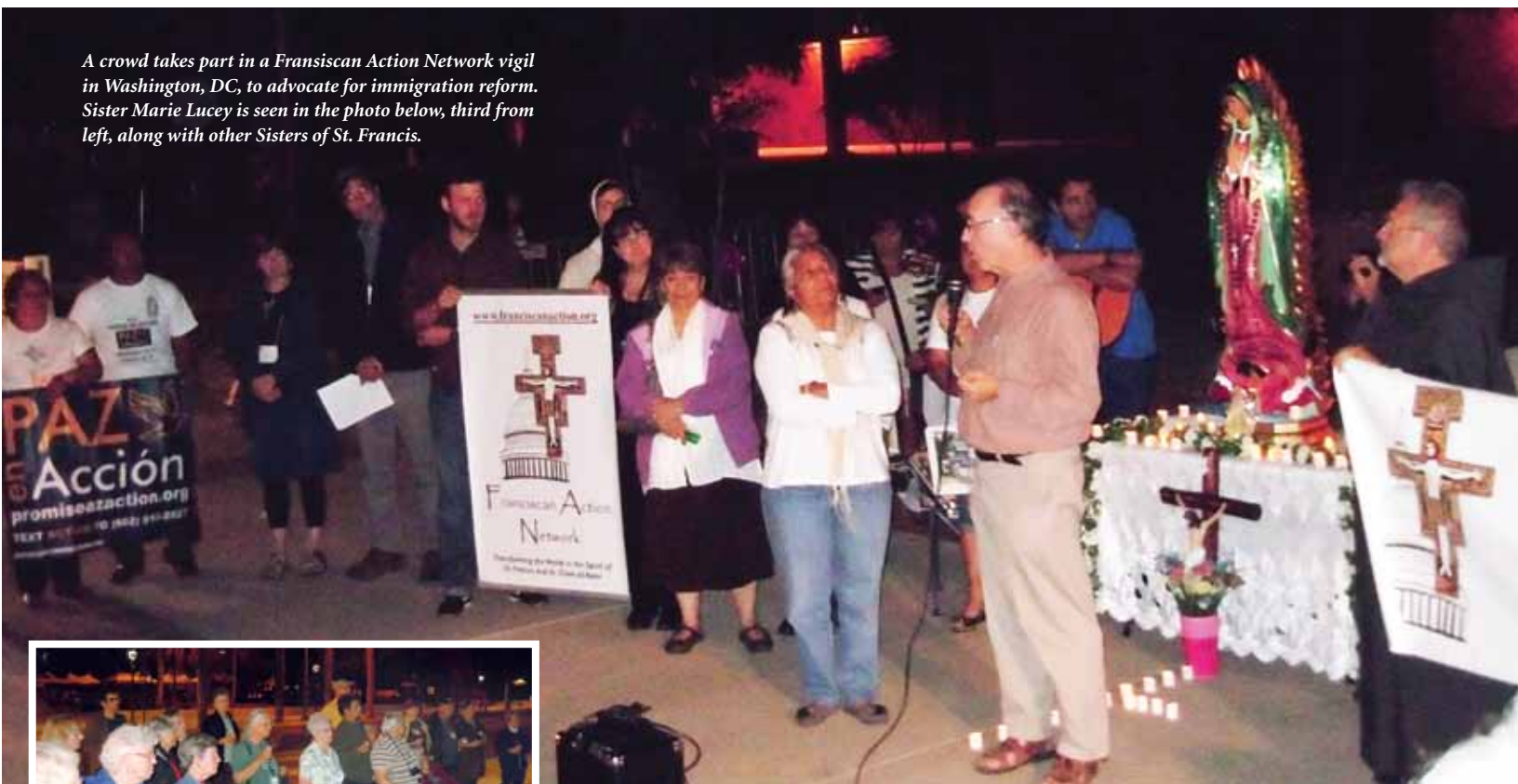
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military—held the potential for a lasting solution for these young people. Now more than a decade later, the proposed legislation still has not passed and those whose lives hang in the balance continue to wait.

“People often ask why immigrants don’t just come in legally,” said Sister Marie Lucey who works extensively on the issue of immigration as director of advocacy for the Franciscan Action Network (FAN). “The answer is that it is very difficult to get into the United States legally. The quotas are very small and it requires years of waiting.”

Many of those wishing to emigrate to the United States do not have the luxury of that

decrease, there are still no provisions for people to come out of the shadows and begin on a path to citizenship,” said Sister Marie. “What we need is comprehensive (or humane, compassionate) immigration reform.” Comprehensive reform supported by the US Catholic Bishops and many faith groups includes a path to citizenship, family unity, a worker program, due process, and addressing root causes. Legislation would probably require a process in which undocumented people with no criminal record who already pay some taxes, would pay a fine, and be in line for citizenship—a process which could take several years. “Since the 2012 elections, there is new hope for immigration reform in 2013 because

*A crowd takes part in a Franciscan Action Network vigil in Washington, DC, to advocate for immigration reform. Sister Marie Lucey is seen in the photo below, third from left, along with other Sisters of St. Francis.*



kind of time. Alicia’s parents, for example, fled Mexico when economic hardships made it impossible for them to provide for Alicia and her four siblings. “They left Mexico because they couldn’t feed their children,” explained Alicia. “They couldn’t afford to spend years waiting in line.”

According to Sister Marie, the challenge for undocumented immigrants who are already in the U.S. is enormous. “Although deportation, which has been on the rise for the past three years, has now begun to

both political parties agree that it is needed,” said Sister Marie. “Finally such reform may now be on the horizon.”

## Taking A Stand

In 1996, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia took a corporate stand to work for more just and humane immigration legislation. Sister Marie’s ministry puts her at the forefront of this crusade, lobbying for comprehensive (or humane, compassionate) immigration reform that will



Completing immigration paperwork can be a complicated and daunting task, especially if the forms are not in your native language. The caring and knowledgeable staff members and volunteers at East Bay help clients negotiate the overwhelming raft of documents and help people avoid common pitfalls that can delay processing.



▼ Sister Maureen talks with one of the center's many student volunteers. Volunteers are essential to allowing East Bay Sanctuary Covenant to function. They do everything from completing intakes, to acting as translators, participating in fundraisers, and accompanying and advocating for asylum-seekers and immigrants during interviews and appointments.



“WE WORK TO LIFT PEOPLE UP IN A COMPASSIONATE WAY—TO TRAIN THEM SO THEY CAN BECOME PART OF THE U.S. SYSTEM AND FEEL THAT THIS IS TRULY THEIR HOME.”

diminish the economic and political hardships immigrants face. Her daily schedule includes initiating email campaigns, making congressional visits, and providing updates that keep people informed about what they can do to support positive changes to immigration law.

In May 2012, Sister Marie took part in a White House briefing, sharing personal stories like Alicia's with government officials as the White House worked on possible deferred action solutions in the wake of the DREAM Act's failure to become law. In June President Obama signed an executive order approving the two-year period of deferred action developed by the Department of Homeland Security and known as DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.) Those who were brought to the U.S. as children, who were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012, who are high school graduates or enrolled in school or in the U.S. military, and who have a clean record would be eligible. Having brought a human face to the issue of immigration during those White House deliberations was a rewarding achievement

for Sister Marie. “I felt like those stories helped encourage the president to enact the executive action,” said Sister Marie.

Although the action wasn't the full passage of the DREAM Act that advocates like Sister Marie had been working and hoping for, it was still a step in the right direction. “I've been involved in justice work for a long time,” she said. “I have learned that in this kind of work you work as hard as you can—and you work with hope—but you must measure your success in very small steps.”

### Leading The Way

Sister Maureen Duignan knows all about the small steps that make up a long journey. As executive director of East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC) in Berkeley, California, she interacts directly with immigrants as they struggle to gain legal status in the United States.

*Political sign with religious tone at a pro-immigration rally in USA.*

In addition to helping young people seek protection through deferred action, the center provides refugees and immigrants with a variety of low cost or free legal services. Staff members assist refugees from all over the world in obtaining asylum applications. In addition to providing undocumented victims of violent crime with U-Visa applications, they also provide clients with simpler types of immigration aid—help renewing work permits, applying for travel documents, adjusting status, immigrating family members, and answering countless questions.

Although East Bay Sanctuary Covenant does not advertise or recruit clients, word of mouth brings 50+ people to the office every day. The paths that bring them there differ. Some are victims of political or ethnic persecution. Others are individuals who have been tormented because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Still

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# Take Concrete Action Toward Immigration Reform

- Pray for people facing war, terror, political persecution, intolerance, and exploitation and for those who struggle to gain citizenship in the United States.
- Call, write, or fax your representatives in support of comprehensive immigration reform.
- Submit a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece for your local newspaper. Many people are poorly informed about immigration issues, leading to misunderstanding and prejudice.
- Use social media to engage a broad audience in the discussion of immigration reform. Facebook and Twitter are no-cost, wide-reaching tools that can bring the issues facing undocumented immigrants to the forefront among those connected to you.
- Watch your language. The use of the words like “illegal” and “aliens” to describe undocumented immigrants living in the United States is polarizing and dehumanizing.
- Volunteer at a center that works with immigrants. Many are looking for people to answer the phones, help with paperwork, act as translators, or teach English as a second language.
- Use the attached envelope to make a donation to East Bay Sanctuary Covenant.

*Sister Maureen works with Ruben Garibaldo who serves as temporary protective status coordinator and refugee rights program assistant at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant.*



*Promoting positive outcomes for children in immigrant families is critical given that they are the fastest growing segment of the child population in the United States.*



## “IMMIGRATION IS A MORAL ISSUE AND IT IS EVERYONE’S ISSUE.”

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others are women who have been victims of genital mutilation and other forms of sexual violence in their native countries. Through a mission fund grant, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia fund an attorney who works with the many genital mutilation cases that come through EBSC.

Giro, a client of the Refugee Rights Program at EBSC, found her way to the center after a horrific struggle. A native of the Congo, Giro was kidnapped by rebel soldiers in 2008 and brutally tortured and raped. She managed to flee but was later imprisoned when local townspeople suspected her of sympathizing with the rebels. Starved and beaten in prison, Giro eventually escaped—disguised as a nun—with the help of a sister. “She came to East Bay hoping against hope that we could help her,” said Sister Maureen. “She told her story—all the horrible details. The tears and the pain—it was unbelievable.”

The staff at EBSC accompanied Giro through the complex and protracted asylum process. After her intake interview, Giro was assigned to a law student and overseen by one of EBSC’s experienced attorneys. They worked with her every step of the way from filing forms to drafting a declaration of her life experiences to preparing her for an interview with

the Department of Homeland Security and representing her at that interview. Though the process was very difficult for Giro, requiring her to tell and retell her gruesome story, she persevered and was granted asylum. Today Giro is in school and is employed as a secretary.

### Easing The Transition

Of course, Giro’s struggle did not end when she was granted asylum and neither did East Bay’s commitment to her. EBSC’s staff continues to work with Giro as she goes through the steps of attaining permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship. They have provided her with a therapist as she continues to rebuild her life in the wake of all she has experienced. And they have taken her into EBSC’s Community Development and Education (CDE) Program—a program focused on integrating new immigrants into the United States.

“To move into this country without any assistance is so hard,” said Sister Maureen. “We work to lift people up in a compassionate way—to train them so they can become part of the U.S. system and feel that this is truly their home.”

Toward that end, EBSC provides ESL classes as well as workshops focused on health, safety, finances, computer literacy, and leadership. They also make referrals for housing, jobs, and education and support

*A man holds a sign calling for immigration reform by the U.S. Congress. Photo courtesy of spirit of america / Shutterstock.com*







*"We feel so privileged to lift people up in such a compassionate way," said Sister Maureen of the work done at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. "We support people so they can be the active in determining their own destinies."*

immigrants as they take their first steps toward a new life.

Manuel De Paz is director of the Community Development and Education program at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant and is himself a former El Salvadoran refugee who received help from EBSC. He works with immigrants on an individual basis, walking with them through the challenges they face as newcomers to the country. In one case, a client who was going through the CDE program began having problems with a landlord who was harassing him. Manuel, with the help of one of the staff attorneys, helped the man advocate for himself, resulting in a restraining order against the landlord. Today, that client has become a leader, giving workshops and helping others navigate the challenges of integration.

"The idea is to give people a set of skills so they can be active in determining their own destinies," said Sister Maureen. "The people who go through the CDE program learn to help themselves, to teach others, and to be a voice for their community."

### Championing The Cause

In a time when anti-immigration bias seems to be growing, those voices are more essential than ever to promote respect and inclusion for individuals seeking to make the United States their home. After all, "almost everyone in this country has immigrant roots," said Sister Maureen. In addition to sisters like Marie and Maureen whose full-time ministries are dedicated to helping immigrants, many Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia are finding ways to help in big and small

ways. In Tacoma, Washington, Sister Pat Michalek came to the rescue of an indigenous Guatemalan woman who was about to be bonded out of a detention center there. She brought food and clothes to the young woman and helped set her up to make the journey to California and East Bay. Throughout the country, sisters are involved in prayer vigils and letter-writing campaigns centered on promoting just, comprehensive immigration reform.

"Immigration is a moral issue and it is everyone's issue," said Sister Maureen. "It is time to cease the criminalization of immigrants, to end the intolerance and injustice directed toward them, to embrace them, and to accept the gifts they have to share." ■

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

# PEOPLE & PLACES

## KENYA

Sisters Frances Cassidy and Rose Monica Katusz may have returned home from their ministry in Africa but their work at Lawson High School in Kenya is still being appreciated. They were invited to a special dinner and awards ceremony at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Washington, DC. The event commemorated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Nyumbani Children's Home and was sponsored by the Children of God Relief Fund (COGRI), an organization which provides funding for the

various segments of the Nyumbani project. Sisters Rose and Frances were honored for their work in establishing Lawson High School which is in Nyumbani Village. Both received beautiful plaques acknowledging their efforts during the first two years of the school's existence. Sister Frances' plaque identified her as the founding principal of the high school while Sister Rose's acknowledged her work in establishing the school's science department.



▲ Sisters Frances Cassidy (left) and Rose Monica Katusz (right) responded to the request of Sister Mary Owens (center), executive director of COGRI, to establish Lawson High School. The school's mission is to "assist young people to reach their highest potential by developing their abilities and talents in order to be prepared for their future as citizens of Kenya and of the world."

## 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

The Irish American Business Chamber and Network, Inc., chose Sister Marguerite O'Beirne as the 2013 recipient of their Uachtarán Award. Uachtarán in Irish means "president" and is presented to individuals who exemplify the service to the community that the Irish president demonstrates on a daily basis. The award acknowledged Sister Marguerite's "dedication and support of education, both spiritual and physical" and the fortitude she has shown "in cultivating educational ideas that are now flourishing." The award was presented by Michael Collins, Ireland's ambassador to the U.S. Sister Marguerite and the other awardees were invited to be part of a VIP dinner with Ambassador and Mrs. Collins the night before the presentation.

## PENNSYLVANIA

We all tend to look to and plan for the future and the Sisters of St. Francis are no exception. This past year five of our younger sisters became part of the Women Religious Leadership Lab sponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Sisters Patricia Kerezsi, Maggie Gannon, Mary Beth Antonelli, Mary Craig, and Theresa Lamkin attended the first session in August. The three-part workshop spans a two-year period. Its goal is to offer opportunities for "gaining leadership skills by simulating experiences of leadership, examining models of contemporary leadership, and providing opportunities for participants to reflect on their own gifts and challenges."



Sisters Patricia Kerezsi, Maggie Gannon, Mary Beth Antonelli, Mary Craig, and Theresa Lamkin were part of the Leadership Lab.



## NEW JERSEY

Trenton Catholic Academy recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and honored the Sisters of St. Francis with a Mass of Gratitude. Bishop David O'Connell, CM, acknowledged the contributions made by our sisters and outlined the history of the school. Of the seven founding sisters, Sister Elizabeth Scully is the only surviving member—and she was one of the 20 sisters on hand for the occasion. As part of the celebration, current president Sr. Dorothy Payne, SSJ, and faculty member Diane Kennevy presented the congregation with a plaque acknowledging the "selfless dedication to Catholic values and academic excellence in service to the students of St. Anthony High School, St. Anthony Grammar School, McCorristin Catholic High School, and Trenton Catholic Academy (the names by which the school was known over the course of its 50 years)."



► *Sister Fidelis Rubbo meets with the women in one of the gazebo-style shelters constructed as a place to meet and talk about the healthcare needs for their families.*

## HAITI

Very aware of the needs of the Haitian people, we recently created a partnership with the Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, Ohio, to support their mission in Haiti. A formal agreement between the two congregations defined the purpose of the partnership and identified the ministry site as Pestel, a mountain village about 90 miles west of Port-au-Prince. For some of our sisters, this agreement will involve actual on-site ministry with the Sylvania sisters. For all of us, the commitment involves ongoing prayers and education about the needs of the people. To learn more about the sisters' activities in Pestel, visit [www.sistersosf.org/AboutUs/JusticePeace/Haiti.aspx](http://www.sistersosf.org/AboutUs/JusticePeace/Haiti.aspx).



the mosque used the northeast side of the dining room for their evening prayer. The sisters were honored to be present during prayer and to witness the Muslims' great love and reverence for Allah.

need. They have also shared their gifts and talents in local government, education, and business organizations.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Improving Muslim/Christian relationships is a goal that all of us desire. Earlier last year members of our Advocacy Committee visited a local mosque. In November members of the mosque reciprocated with a visit to our motherhouse. Sister Patricia Hutchison did a short presentation on the story of St. Francis' visit to the camp of Malik-al-Kamil, the sultan of Egypt, during the Crusades when Christian soldiers waged war against Muslims. In the midst of violence, Francis and the sultan were able to transcend their differences in a way that enriched both. After Sister Patricia's presentation and the resulting conversation, our visitors joined the sisters for dinner. Following dinner members of

## WASHINGTON

Doug (deceased) and Faye Clerget devoted their lives to "giving back," making them ideal candidates for the 2012 St. Francis Humanitarian of the Year Award presented by the Franciscan Foundation and the Sisters of St. Francis. The award acknowledges individuals and organizations in the Franciscan Health System serving area who show extraordinary commitment to peacemaking, service to those who are poor, diversity, and humility. The Clergets have served St. Francis Hospital in Federal Way in numerous ways, including two scholarship endowments for employees in

## MARYLAND

Sister Ann David Strohming was chosen to receive the Catholic High School of Baltimore's Lux Tua Luceat Service Award. The award acknowledges a TCHS grad who demonstrates the Franciscan core values of personhood in community; loving service; ongoing conversion; witness to justice, peace, and reconciliation; and stewardship and who acknowledges the inherent value of every person and the unique potential of women. Recipients must have demonstrated significant leadership in public and community endeavors and exemplified the mission and vision of Catholic High. Lux Tua Luceat—Let your light shine! Anyone acquainted with TCHS is familiar with their motto. And anyone acquainted with Sister Ann David knows that her light—and the light of the God who continues to call her—does indeed shine through her ongoing service to others!

► *After a presentation, sharing, dinner, prayer, and a tour of the motherhouse, members of the Muslim community gathered for a photo around the sculpture of St. Francis.*





THE CENTER STRIVES TO HELP EACH CHILD BE HIS OR HER  
BEST SELF—SOCIALY, ACADEMICALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY.

# Sister Brings Spirit and Skill to Guardian Angel Childcare

It is 9 A.M. Monday morning and Sister Kathleen Pollard is leading a meeting at Guardian Angel Childcare Center. But instead of a room full of grey suits, coffee cups, and bleary-eyed stares, she is greeted by a sea of bright, smiling faces and has the rapt attention of sixty plus preschoolers. Sr. Kathleen starts with a song followed by an invitation for the children to share special news. With great excitement, one little girl declares that she is turning three; another student announces the arrival of a new baby brother. Today Sister Kathleen is sharing news

of her own—the news that she will be leaving the childcare center in a few short months.

The moment is bittersweet because she will miss the children terribly but feels she must do what God is calling her to do. After answering many questions and receiving hugs from students and staff alike, Sister Kathleen leads the children in the prayer they say each morning, asking God to help them to be kind, helpful, and strong. That final prayer sets the tone for the day and for the center which strives to do just that—help each child be his or her best self—socially, academically, and spiritually.

Located on the eastside of Wilmington, Delaware, Guardian Angel Childcare is a program of the Ministry of Caring, an organization begun in 1976 by Capuchin Franciscan Friar Brother Ronald Giannone to support the city's poor and homeless. Today the Ministry of Caring serves nutritious meals for the hungry at the three Emmanuel Dining Room locations and offers cheerful rooms for residents at their shelters, transitional residences, and long-term housing. They lend a helping hand to the jobless and provide child care and education to the children of those in need. Through their outreach services, the Ministry of Caring listens and learns about the struggles of those who are poor and seeks creative ways to address them. In essence they determine the gaps and seek to fill them.

## Providing Alternatives

The streets surrounding Guardian Angel are lined with dilapidated buildings and are dogged by violence. The median household income of the 70,000+ residents of Wilmington is less than \$40,000 per year according to the City of Wilmington's population and demographics record. A nearby park is plagued with drug dealers who operate in plain view. Amidst all this, the parents at Guardian Angel—mostly single, working mothers—strive to give their children the best life they can. "These are very fine people," said Sister Kathleen. "Most have entry level jobs and can't afford quality child care on their own. That's where we come in. We provide that care."

Sister Kathleen has been at Guardian Angel since it opened 14 years ago. She says she does the "nitty, gritty work" like keeping records, collecting payments, reporting statistics, and producing the center's monthly newsletter. Such practical matters are an essential part of operations for any organization but they are particularly vital for Guardian Angel. The records Sister Kathleen submits to the state are the basis for much of the funding that allows the center to remain open. Ninety percent of families who attend Guardian Angel receive tuition assistance from the State of Delaware through the Child Care Subsidy



*"I find being with children very life-giving," says Sister Kathleen Pollard. Sister Kathleen has been at Guardian Angel Child Care for fourteen years, managing the office and dispensing love and guidance to the children and families that come through its doors.*





*Sister Kathleen leads the prayer at morning meeting. This daily ritual is a special time for students, setting the tone for the day and giving children an opportunity to gather in prayer and share their joys and struggles.*

Program and every child there receives breakfast, lunch, and a snack as part of the Federal Food Program. “Sister Kathleen is extremely organized and she keeps everything running smoothly,” said Guardian Angel Director Janet Chandler. “She is the pulse of what’s going on here. The work she does keeps us operating.” Sister Kathleen sorrowfully admits that it is sure to be a challenge to find someone to fill her shoes once she has gone but has no doubt that the Lord will provide the answer.

### Sharing Love

Anyone who is part of the Guardian Angel family knows that Sister Kathleen has been much more than an administrator. In fact, Janet calls her “the wholesome spirit of the place.” Sister Kathleen’s is the first face children and parents see each morning as they



enter the building and she has a warm welcome for each and every one of them. She greets each child and parent by name at the door, taking time to inquire about particular interests or concerns. “Sister Kathleen is very loving and friendly,” said Shawnet Backus whose three-year-old daughter, Jerriyah, has attended Guardian Angel since she was a year old. “Jerriyah jumps up on a stool and talks to her every morning.”

◀ *Sister Kathleen works very closely with Guardian Angel Director Janet Chandler. “Sister Kathleen is unflappable,” said Janet. “It is a real comfort to be in her presence.”*

In addition to being there for the children, Sister Kathleen provides support and assistance to the parents as well. “She knows and understands our families and is always patient and kind,” said Janet. “She has the ability to sense people’s emotional needs and respond to them. She is always available if people need to talk.”

Shawnet says she relies on Sister Kathleen for advice, encouragement, and understanding. “I love Sister Kathleen,” she explained. “We talk about a lot of stuff. I am a single parent with four children and

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# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for children growing up in difficult circumstances and for the parents, grandparents, and teachers working to provide them with love, support, and guidance.
- Donate books, toys, or coats to schools or child care centers in impoverished areas. New or gently used items that are no longer useful for you can find new life among children with great material needs.
- Volunteer at a school or childcare center. Many places have “grandparent” programs in place where seniors come to class on a regular basis to assist the primary teacher.
- Donate to our education ministries using the enclosed envelope.



*Children from age one through pre-kindergarten attend Guardian Angel, where classrooms are awash with color and filled with student artwork.*



*Children at Guardian Angel have the opportunity to work on computers, an activity that some of them do not have access to at home.*



*Children at Guardian Angel receive breakfast, lunch, and a snack each school day as part of the federal food program.*

*continued from page 13*

she is someone I can go to if I am upset.” Sister Kathleen also looks out for the families’ more material needs, making sure children have backpacks at the start of the school year and gifts at Christmas time.

According to Sister Kathleen, her background in education has contributed tremendously to her work. “I taught for 27 years and I absolutely loved it,” she said. “I still use the knowledge and skills I gained during that time. I’ve had parents come in and tell me they are having difficulties with a child and I will say ‘When I taught, this always worked for me.’ I think they appreciate that.”

## Challenging The Mind

In addition to a safe haven and a caring setting, Guardian Angel provides a strong academic curriculum. That was definitely a big part of the draw for Shawnet when she was looking for the right place to send her daughter. “I wanted Jerriyah to have a good education,” said Shawnet. “I have been very happy with Guardian Angel. Jerriyah is learning so much for just turning three. She knows her ABCs and 123s and she always wants me to read her a book.”

The curriculum at Guardian Angel prepares children to succeed academically. Classroom teachers focus on weekly themes such as the five senses or colors, engaging students in appropriate activities accord-



*Although most of her time is spent in the office, Sister Kathleen sometimes is able to get into the classroom to read stories or participate in activities with the children.*

ing to their age and ability. Fundamental skills such as math and reading are stressed and parents are able to see the progress as children advance from recognizing letters in the two-year old class, to listening for sounds as a three year old, to being able to read some sight words before they move on to kindergarten. In addition to such tradi-





*Guardian Angel strives to be a warm environment, a place where children are lovingly cared for while they are away from their own families.*



*The curriculum at Guardian Angel gives students a strong foundation in a variety of subjects to ensure that children succeed when they reach school.*

tional instruction, students work with the latest technology including computers and Smartboards.

### Feeding The Spirit

Along with stretching the children's minds, Guardian Angel endeavors to guide their hearts. Staff members work hard to instill core values like kindness and respect. "It is a Christian setting," said Sister Kathleen. "We teach the importance of caring for others. We pray with the children in the morning and at mealtimes. There is that element of faith."

According to Janet, this is another area in which Sister Kathleen excels. "Sister Kathleen is really good at bringing spirituality right to the children's level," said Janet. "She has a special gift for leading children in prayer in a way that speaks to them."

### Receiving Gifts

Not surprisingly, the children have a special way of speaking to Sister Kathleen's soul in return. "I have learned so much about trusting the goodness of God by watching the children," said Sister Kathleen. "We had a fire drill the other day and I went down

to the one-year-old classroom to help get the children out. The sound of the alarm was horrible and the flashing lights were so bright; the children just clung to me, whether they knew me or not. I was the adult so they trusted me. I see that as the way I need to transfer my trust to God."

That kind of profound trust is central to Guardian Angel, a place where parents trust that their children will be nurtured when they can't be with them. "Guardian Angel is a warm, inviting, engaging place—a place where children feel valued and respected," said Sister Kathleen. For Sister Kathleen that trust has taken on new meaning as she prepares to move on to a new ministry—leaving a ministry that she loves and to which she has contributed so much and moving on to a new ministry to which she feels God is calling her. ■

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



*"I believe our children feel safe, special, and happy here," said Sister Kathleen. "We have often been told that our facility just feels like a home. We work hard to do that. The fact that we have a waiting list says that maybe we are succeeding."*

# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

— Anne Frank (adapted)

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

## Companion Recommitment

From Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey to Oregon and Washington, our Companions in Faith gathered with their local groups to renew their commitment to the Companions in Mission program. Prayer services and faith sharing, gatherings in chapel or in nature—the formats varied but the essentials were constant. These women and men were choosing to recommit themselves once again to walk with the Sisters of St. Francis in ways that best fit their lifestyle. Similar recommitments were made by our Companions in Ministry who actively participate in a volunteer position in one of our ministries and by our Companions in Prayer, men and women from across the U.S. and abroad who support our mission and charism through their commitment to daily prayer for the sisters and their intentions.



▲ When Gilbert had no place to live, Sisters Sheila Mary Byrne and Stella Mary Breen kept him with them for two weeks until placement in a group home could be arranged.

## Saying Goodbye after 25 Years

This summer Sisters Stella Mary Breen and Sheila Mary Byrne will be leaving the Franciscan Center on Saint Helena Island after 25 years of service. When they arrived there in 1987, Bishop Underkoffler asked them to “live among the poor and be present to their needs.” The sisters responded by traveling the island’s dusty roads, talking and listening. They developed programs for immigrants who needed help and worked with a lawyer to find ways of achieving resident status. They encouraged students to stay in school, tutored ESL and literacy programs, and began a summer enrichment program. The sisters even set up a home repair program and encouraged other organizations and churches to help. Today the center has more than 150 volunteers, an active migrant ministry, an immigrant ministry, a pantry and thrift shop, numerous seasonal activities, and programs to assist the elderly.

## A Welcomed Reunion

A number of our sisters gathered recently at St. Joseph Family Center in Spokane for a very special reunion with a group of very special guests. The site had, for many years, housed St. Joseph Children’s Home and the special guests were some of the children who were raised in the home and, in some cases, the children of those former residents. A touching story in *The Spokesman-Review* captured the feelings of the folks who grew up at St. Joseph’s and the regard they still felt for the sisters who cared for them. As the article points out, the orphanage which opened in 1890 and continued in service until 1981 was the only home that many of these children remembered.

## Honoring our Sisters

Our sisters at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Middle River were honored at a special Mass and reception. The congregation’s connection with the parish began in 1925 when five sisters arrived to open a school. They began with only 10 students but within four years the enrollment had grown to 243 children. Over the years the school continued to expand and eventually included a high school. The sisters also visited the sick and served in all areas of parish ministry. The celebration—attended by many of our sisters who had ministered in the parish over the years—honored the last two sisters to serve in the school, Sisters Margaret Maureen Thompson and Elizabeth Mary Novak, as well as Sister Anna Maria Keenaghan who has lived in the parish and participated in parish functions for many years.





## In Memoriam

Sister Ann Michele Zwosta  
November 1, 2012

Sister Patricia Mary Bianco  
November 23, 2012

Sister Bridget McGoldrick  
(formerly Sister Camillus)  
December 5, 2012

Sister Dennis Michael Taltys  
December 7, 2012

Sister Kathleen Garrity  
(formerly Sister Austin Mary)  
January 3, 2013

Sister Joan Griffin  
(formerly Sister Jamesina)  
January 13, 2013

## CELEBRATING *Jubilee* AS SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

*Congratulations to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia celebrating milestones in their religious life! Join with us in congratulating them on many years of service to the people of God as Sisters of St. Francis.*

### *75 years* Professed 1938 DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER COLUMBKILL O'CONNOR  
SISTER ANGELA PATRICE POWER  
SISTER JEAN CLARE ROHE  
SISTER JOHN CATHERINE ROHE

### *70 years* Professed 1943 DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER MARIE EVELYN SINNETT  
SISTER ROSE IMMACULATE WALLER

### *50 years* Professed 1963 GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANNE HEDWIG AMATI  
SISTER CELESTE CLAVEL  
SISTER ANGELA DEFONTES  
SISTER KATHLEEN FRANCES DONOVAN  
SISTER ROSE MARIE EICHNER  
SISTER KATHLEEN MARIE GANNON  
SISTER MARY CATHERINE GURLEY  
SISTER PATRICIA MARIE HINTON  
SISTER MARGARET MARY KLEIN  
SISTER JOAN ANN KOLISS  
SISTER CHRISTINE KRANICHFELD  
SISTER MICHELE GAIL O'BRIEN  
SISTER ELEANOR JOSEPH PECK  
SISTER MARIE ANGELA PRESENZA  
SISTER MARGARET XAVIER ROMANS  
SISTER WILLIAM MARGARET ROMEN  
SISTER CATHERINE MARIE SWARTZ

▶ Recognize a name? Would you like to reconnect or send a congratulatory note?  
Send communications to Florence Smith, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014  
[communications@osfphila.org](mailto:communications@osfphila.org)



Members of the FAN staff and other FAN members gathered as the Supreme Court heard arguments on anti-immigrant law in the Washington, D.C. They were joined in spirit and prayer by many supporters on behalf of all immigrants.

## FAN Celebrates Five Years

Franciscan Action Network (FAN) recently celebrated its fifth anniversary. A glance at FAN's website demonstrates all that the organization has achieved over its brief history and outlines the ongoing commitment they make in their justice endeavors. FAN's focus on care for creation resulted in a statement on the gulf oil crisis and the development of ongoing efforts encouraging groups and individuals to sign a pledge to care for the Earth. Achievements in peacemaking efforts include the Civility in Discourse program, the Institute for Peace program, and Franciscan Peacemaking in the Holy Land. FAN's efforts in the area of poverty and human rights focus on economic justice, immigration, and the elimination of torture. The Sisters of St. Francis have been actively involved in FAN's programs since its inception—both individually and communally. Sister Miriam Eileen Murray continues to serve on the Board of Commissions and Sister Marie Lucey is now the Director of Advocacy and Member Relations.

# Focus

► *Conscientious...determined...orderly... positive...dedicated—all words that describe Somnut Brewster whose loving attention to detail speaks of her sense of pride in her work.*



## SOMNUT BREWSTER

"SOMNUT TAKES PRIDE IN HER WORK AS THOUGH THIS WERE HER HOME AND SHE WAS EXPECTING VERY IMPORTANT GUESTS TO ARRIVE."

▼ *Although plant care isn't an official part of her job description, Somnut will offer anyone who asks a very logical explanation: "When you're thirsty, you drink. When they're thirsty, I give them water!"*

Somnut Brewster left her native Thailand in 1975 and, because her husband Tony was in the military, moved to Florida, to the Philippines, and back to Florida where she raised her twin daughters Cynthia and Teresa. Eventually the family moved north and settled near Tony's former home in Chester. Somnut learned about a job opening in housekeeping at Our Lady of Angels Convent. She met the Sisters of St. Francis and announced, "I plan to stay here!"

Twenty-two years later Somnut still holds fast to that determination. "The sisters welcome you," she explained. "They make you one of their own—like a family." That sense of family has a definite effect on how Somnut handles the details of her work. "She is very dedicated to her job and to the sisters," said Sister Ruth Bernadette O'Connor, administrator of Our Lady of Angels. "She is a very conscientious, dependable, and quiet worker who always attends to every detail." Early morning finds Somnut making the rounds of the first floor offices, hallways, and bathrooms—and her presence means more than just a freshly vacuumed rug or a clean sink. "She greets each occupant with a warm presence and a smile," said Sister Betty Kane. "She'll often share stories of her grandchildren—and she's a woman with 10 green fingers and thumbs who loves and nurtures our plants!"

Looking back over her years at Our Lady of Angels, Somnut tried to explain why she considers her work more than just a job. "It's not just for a paycheck," she explained. "I try to go the extra mile for the sisters." Sister Ruth added her own explanation, saying "Somnut takes pride in her work as though this were her home and she was expecting very important guests to arrive."

While Somnut has no immediate plans to change her original declaration—"I plan to stay here"—she has given some thought to what she might do in retirement. "Maybe I'll volunteer at Red Hill Farm," she laughed. "Then I can come to lunch each day and visit the sisters."



◀ *For Somnut, time away from work is family time. Back Row: (l-r) Daughter Teresa; grandchildren Jordan and Aun'Jay; daughter Cynthia; Bottom Row: (l-r) Grandchildren Nasir, Leah, and Israel; Somnut.*



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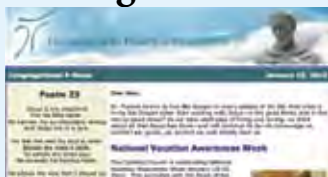
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## SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

# Where There's a *Will*... There's a *Way*.

*A will is a written legal document that controls the distribution of your property after your death.*

*A will is your only guarantee that your estate will be distributed according to your wishes.*

Have you ever wanted to do something for a Sister of St. Francis who taught you or another family member in elementary, high school, or higher education? Perhaps it was a Sister of St. Francis who reached out to you when you were experiencing the loss of a loved one and needed someone to support and comfort you. Whatever the situation, you appreciated her and would have liked to express your gratitude. The time wasn't right because you had other responsibilities that did not afford you the opportunity to gift the Sisters of St. Francis. Now, however, is a different time and now you can say "Thank You" because your responsibilities have changed.

By including the Sisters of St. Francis in your will, you help to ensure the care of the sisters in their retirement years and the continuation of their ministries. The sisters have few resources besides their courageous spirit and their trust in God's providence. Now you can help to support the sisters' retirement or their ministries by providing for them in your will.

*I would like to be contacted about giving through my will.*

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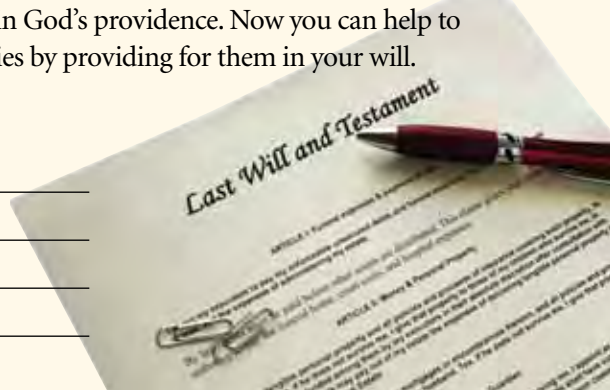
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▼ *Neumann University's annual Keep the Dream Alive Concert provides students and visitors alike a renewed awareness of the issue of immigration and the need for comprehensive reform.*



## Keeping the Dream Alive at Neumann University

The congregation and many of our sponsored ministries work to bring about much needed comprehensive immigration reform through education and awareness. In January Neumann University students once again held their Keep the Dream Alive Concert. This year's theme was "I have a story...will you listen?" Maria Sotomayor was the project's student leader and was joined by Daniel Rowe and Christopher Fernandez from the Peace Alliance. Following the concert, attendees shopped at the fair trade table sponsored by the COR Ministry Team and the Student Peace Alliance Club and enjoyed an art display from La Puerta Abierta, a Philadelphia organization that offers healing, counseling, and support for immigrants.



*Helping to develop the young mind has long been a cherished ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis. Many sisters have been blessed by the delight in a child's eyes as they experience story time. Back in 1954, Sister Miriam Therese Hogan took much joy in teaching first-graders at St. Joseph School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the fundamental skill of reading. Sister Kathleen Pollard experiences the joy of children in many ways, including story time, at Guardian Angels Daycare in the heart of Wilmington, Delaware. Read about how Sister Kathleen is making a difference in the hearts and minds of children on page 12.*

## Patient Care Recognized

Sister Maggie Greco recently received the "Patient Choice Award" from the Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers for her work at Philadelphia's Mary Howard Center. The award is new this year and recognizes outstanding individuals who have made a significant difference in a patient's or family member's health or well-being. What makes this award very special is that nominations come solely from patients at the various clinics.



*Sister Maggie Greco, a nurse-practitioner at the Mary Howard Health Center in Center City Philadelphia, checks the heart rate of Sonia Joseph.*